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Critical hours in the
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CRITICAL HOURS
IN THE PREACHER'S LIFE

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CRITICAL HOURS IN THE PREACHER'S LIFE

BY
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CRITICAL HOURS IN THE PREACHER'S LIFE. II

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TO MY SON

JOEL MATLOCK WAREING

WHO SEEKS TO BE A GOOD MINISTER
OF JESUS CHRIST

PREFACE

It may be of interest to my readers to know the source of this little volume. It was not born after months of incubation. It sprang into being in a day. It came up from the depths of a thought life that had been deeply stirred. It appeared as though born out of the fire of a deep passion of conviction. It found its inception, not in the intellectual life, through any analytical process, but in the repeated wounding of the heart, by the failure of those whom I had known to love and to trust. During the past six years I have seen almost a score of ministers fall from the heights of spiritual leadership to the depths of shame and disgrace. Many of these have been my personal acquaintances, some of them my familiar friends.

Accompanying this experience came the information given to the public of the great ravages that were being made upon the ministry during and immediately following the war, by moral breakdown. That record is so appalling

that no one would take pleasure in discussing it or in displaying a desire to exploit it, feeling that it had better be forgotten than in the least remembered. In the hour of suffering which this realization produced came the appeal to my soul in behalf of the spiritual integrity of the Christian ministry. This cry would not be quieted. It called out from the deep resources of memory the record of the spiritual life of at least twenty of the world's greatest preachers with whom I had become acquainted by reading their biographies. Viewing their achievements and the magnitude of their characters as they stand in the altitudes, silhouetting themselves on the promontories of eminence against the background of eternity, one discovers the secret of their greatness. Any one may read and learn thereby. The contrast between those heights and the struggling minister who suddenly turns and is precipitated to the depths where tragedy awaits him, working his ruin, produces a shock from which a sensitive soul cannot readily recover. There is a depth to which a minister may fall, where his ignominy is more distressing than the ravages of physical pain, where his condemnation is more searching than that given unto

any other man. His cry from the depths when he comes to himself is more pathetic than that of a fallen angel. Unless God goes to his relief, there is no possible restoration. Out of this vision of wreckage and tragedy during the critical hours of a minister's life came the following discussion.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PART I: A CRY FROM THE DEPTHS . . .	15
<i>A Young Minister in Distress</i>	15
I BITTER SELF-DEFENSE	17
II CHECKMATED BY TEAM-MATES	29
III BITTER RESENTMENT	40
IV BITTER ACKNOWLEDGMENT	50
 PART II: LOOKING INTO THE DEPTHS	 63
<i>Perils of Present Day Ministry</i>	63
I WHEN MINISTERS FALL	67
II THE CRITICAL HOURS	71
The Moral Crisis	75
The Intellectual Crisis	83
The Spiritual Crisis	90
The Vocational Crisis	95
III THE PRESENT CRITICAL MOMENT	105
 PART III: ESCAPE FROM THE DEPTHS	 115
<i>The Young Minister Recovers Faith</i>	115
I OVER A LONG TRAIL	121
II DISCOVERY OF JESUS CHRIST	135
III DISCOVERY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	145
IV DISCOVERY OF CHRISTIANITY	155
 PART IV: THE LEVEL OF DELIVERANCE	 169

PART I: A CRY FROM THE
DEPTHS

“O thou that holdest the stars in thy right hand and walkest in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Thou hast spoken in thy mercy to me. And thou hast given me an ear to hear thy merciful words toward me. Lord, I repent. At thy call I repent. I repent of many things in my ministry at Ephesus. But of nothing so much as of my restraint of secret prayer. This has been my besetting sin. This has been the worm at the root of all my mistakes and misfortunes in my ministry. This has been my blame. Oh, spare me according to thy word. Oh, suffer me a little longer that I may yet serve thee. What profit is there in my blood? Shall the dead hold communion with thee? Shall the grave of a castaway minister redound honor to thee? Restore thou my soul. Restore once more to me the joy of thy salvation, then will I teach transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto thee. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

ALEXANDER WHYTE.

Part I: A Cry from the Depths

A Young Minister in Distress

The church is very closely related to the world. They move forward side by side. They acquire and share together. In the hours of wisdom they recognize the laws of mutuality. What affects one influences the other. When the world passes through its cycles of prosperity, decline, depression and improvement, the church goes with it. In the depths of depression their problems are the same. On the heights of prosperity they diverge and differ greatly. But when the struggle is intensified midst falling prices and unemployment, when pessimism begets conservatism and caution counsels retrenchment, then they converge until they move in the same direction and by parallel courses. Explain it as we will, by the law of association as related to one common interest—human interests and values,—by the law of action and reaction, by the unvarying operation of the law

16 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

of gravitation, there still remains the fact that the church is caught up by the processes that influence the world and is suddenly made to face the tragedy of circumstances over which it has no control and for which it is not responsible.

I was discussing this subject with a young minister who was passing through the experience of depression, pessimism, and bitter disappointment. He had resolved to leave the ministry. We were arguing from one point to another when, suddenly, as if exasperated, he exclaimed, "Nevertheless, I am done. I have had enough. I have received the jolt of disillusionment. I shall leave the ministry at the earliest moment."

That seemed to be a final decision. The impulse of an emotion colored with bitterness accentuated it. He had not spoken of it after serious consideration but in the heat of a hot heart. It reflected rashness. It revealed an impetuous impatience. I could not afford to permit such a resolution to go unchallenged. Our conversation had been general and discursive, evading decided disagreement for fear of an unpleasant argument. I determined it should become directly personal and convince him, if possible, that he was making a mistake.

I

BITTER SELF-DEFENSE

He sat opposite me at my desk. He was white of lip and restless as one caught by sinister forces. He saw no other way out of his difficulty. He could not go forward and see it through with the feeling that the way would clear. There was a mystery about it we could not fathom. Something had blasted the fair flower of his ministry before he had finished a dozen years in its service. He was university and seminary trained, the honor man of his class. He had given the best promise of success and had made a place for himself that had an outlook toward usefulness in the most outstanding fields of service. Scarcely thirty-seven years of age and he had finished.

“What has happened,” I asked, “that makes you resolve to change the course of your life? Do you know what it means to say that you are going to leave the ministry? The ministry is not something a man can abandon without some feeling that the church and God have released

18 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

him. Have you conferred with the church? Have you prayed over this until you feel that God has annulled your ordination and released you from the obligations that were placed upon you when you dedicated your life to his ministry?"

The young man looked at me quizzically and replied, "I always expect that kind of talk. It is a spiritual palliative I dislike. It is a species of cant for which I have little regard. There is so much religious unreality these days. I have no use for it. When a man gets enough of anything, if he is sensible, if he is honest, he will acknowledge it. If he is wise he will terminate his relation with it. I have been disillusioned. I have been undeceived. I have not been a spiritual gourmand seeking always to delight a tickled palate with delicious and delectable emotional experiences. I have not sought to drown doubts and misgivings in spiritual intoxications. It seems that is what is required. I have resolved to be sane and sound and at all times reasonable. If I cannot continue to be, I have determined what to do,—act in the light of my best knowledge and highest resolution!"

With this further confession I saw him

slightly give in his nervous tension. The stiffness he had manifested receded and a softness came into his voice. Traces of regret appeared. I found myself looking into the face of a young man who had suffered deeply because he had discovered that the Christian ministry was not what he had thought it to be. There he sat before me with the full flush of youth upon him. He had scarcely gotten started upon his life journey. He had not struck his pace. He had seen what appeared to be an opening before him. He had entered with great anticipations. He had run a few paces, slowed up, looked around and succumbed to misgivings when he discovered that the rich things he had expected to acquire, and all the happiness he had foreseen, and all the wonderful achievements he had been assured he would attain, were but a dream.

Obviously, it would be difficult to get back into his life and locate the cause of his trouble, since spiritual diagnosis requires the most tactful penetration. There was some fundamental reason for this experience through which he was passing. It might not be found in himself, but possibly in his training. His ideas of what

20 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

the ministry is might be incorrect. I resolved to discover the source of his disaffection and do what I could to save him from the early wrecking of his spiritual life.

“What led you to enter the ministry?” I asked. “You have not gone far enough to have generated that force which maintains men on high levels, for, if you had, it would not have so soon spent itself.”

“I received,” he replied, “the impression that led to my decision to enter the ministry in my early teens. I had not had a chance to come to any understanding about the various activities that appeal to the energies of youth. I was worked upon by influences that laid hold of me before I had a chance to think for myself and to establish the least valuation of the other walks of life.”

“Do you mean to say,” I questioned, seeking to keep him going, “that you were taken advantage of and that before you started on your life course that you were seized upon and influenced by situations that denied you the chance to get the broadest view of life?”

“I am prone to think that very thing,” he asserted quickly. “If I had not been forced to a

decision so early in my youth, I would not be suffering the experience through which I am now passing."

This was a confession that carried with it an element of regret I did not believe went deep into his soul. He spoke, however, almost with rancor, which made me feel that he himself verily believed that he was making no mistake in the interpretation of his own feeling.

"But do you not think," I urged, "that your life decision followed along the line your natural talents and instincts and tastes would have led you? Even though you had been given the opportunity to wait until the mature years of your early twenties before you made your decision, do you not believe you would have chosen the same course?"

"No, I cannot look at it that way," he confessed. "I am by nature religious. I was nurtured in a Christian home. I was taught by religious instructors and the whole spiritual side of my life was placed under such strong development that the wide view was not offered me. I can look back at it now and see very plainly how I was held by circumstances and environment to the course I took. It was almost impossible for

22 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

me to will to do otherwise. I was held under the influence of formative forces over which I had no control. When a man is born with a religious nature and endowed with spiritual instincts and is seized upon by religious educational methods that rapidly develop him into taking positions and committing himself to decisions that determine the entire course of his life, when he comes to himself, he will feel there was an element of unfairness about it that he cannot avoid resenting. I feel this most profoundly. I do not know why it has come over me, but I have an apprehension that I have been wronged. You asked me why I entered the ministry. It was inevitable from my training. I might have taken another course if I had been given time. I feel that I have been defeated in the first maneuver of my life. The ideals which once fired my spiritual and intellectual aspirations have given way. The sun that brightened my path has been darkened at noonday."

There was a note in the young man's voice that made me feel he was misinterpreting his own religious experience. It was an opportunity for me to approach his trouble from a different angle and uncover it in the light of another in-

terpretation long held by the church and cherished by ministers who have found the greatest satisfaction in being "good ministers of Jesus Christ."

"You have not answered my question, Why did you enter the ministry? You have tried to explain the processes through which you passed. I want to know if you look upon the ministry as a profession and a vocation, or as a calling. These questions are fundamental and in their answer may be discovered the source of your present perplexity and spiritual darkness. Surely you do not believe any less in the spiritual life, or in the intellectual life, or in the principles of the Christian religion by this decision you have made, do you?"

"You have asked me a very searching question," he replied. "I have not raised it with myself. Since you do, I shall register now this confession that I shall not release any of my faith in my former or present ideals though they have lost their influence over me. I certainly believe in everything I accepted before. I have somehow lost faith in the decision that led me to give myself to the ministry. My confidence has been shattered in my own ability to

24 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

be what I thought I could be in an eminent and successful way.”

“But do you believe that the ministry is a profession or a calling?” I insisted.

“I certainly believe it is a profession,” he replied. “When I started out I remember very plainly that the matter of the ministry was first presented to me as a calling. I rejected that conception as emotional and sentimental, an article in an out-grown creed. Somehow I possessed the idea that I had a life to invest, that I had a certain wealth of nature and native resources, certain talents, that I wanted to place at the best advantage, for the largest possible results, both to myself and mankind. Being by nature religious, when the ministry was held up to me I was easily convinced that it would afford the most productive field for the investment of my life. Why should I not look upon the ministry as an investment? The most appealing thing to a man in his youth is the investment of his life. If he has any conception of what it means to live and move among men he will base his great decision upon investment returns, for that is the most outstanding principle of modern life. To blindly decide to live

your life without thinking of the returns that will come from your labor, your enthusiasm, your devotion and the exercise of your talents, is the culmination of foolishness. Investment means returns. The larger these are the more a man gets out of life."

"Yes, it may seem wise to look upon the ministry as a field in which to invest your life," I agreed. "That may seem a most commendable action of an unselfish personality. A man may take a certain pride in going out and laying down his life with the idea of investing it for the good of others. That is a trait of youth. It is one of the first impulses that come when we awaken to the larger value of human destiny. But your confession this morning proves that it is one of our most perilous conceptions of the Christian ministry. According to your testimony your investment has not brought returns. You are seeking to withdraw it. You have lost faith in it. You are not getting what you expected from it. If you were compounding interest, or even if you were receiving only the legal rate, you perhaps would be satisfied; but you have made your investment, you have waited for its maturity and you are now con-

26 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

fessing to not having received the returns you expected. Why have you been brought to this decision? How did you come to see that the investment was not a good one? Surely you do not consider the ministry 'wild-cat' stock? Certainly you will not say that the ministry is an involvement of a man's life. Other men have made this investment, if you want to look at it in that light. It has brought such returns as to make them bear witness at the end of life that if they had the chance to choose again, they would not hesitate to give themselves to the Christian ministry. But the points of interest for us now should be whether these men look upon it as an investment or a calling, and what has brought you to this conclusion, that you have made a bad bargain; and determine what has forced you to the conviction that the ministry as a profession cannot compete with other professions in its appeal to a young man of unusual parts as he seeks to work out his life program."

"You are taking an undue advantage of my position," he interjected. "You are driving my characterization too hard. The ministry should be an investment, in that it should have its com-

pensations, its returns in which a man can find pleasure and not feel that he is in a losing enterprise."

"Is it not possible that you may be wrong, entirely wrong, in your conception?" I urged. "How do the words of our Lord read? He talked not of profits, but much of losses. 'He that loseth his life for my sake' is known to us all, but very infrequently practiced. No man in the sight of Christ is justified in withholding his life on the basis of returns to himself. He must count his life as naught, if he desires commendation. He must look upon his life as something to be thrown away, as something to be sacrificed, something to be drawn upon to save others who are being ruined. He must train himself to behold others prospering at his expense. 'Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.' That is fundamental. Willingness to perish, to die, to return to the dust that another may spring up in his place, that is the attitude of the Christian minister."

"Yes," he contended, "but there is an element of investment in that."

"An element of sacrificial service," I insisted.

28 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

"No returns to the man himself. You are not following the lead of Christ in your conception of the ministry."

"That is frank, on your part," he answered gravely. "Do you mean to say that I have not the Christian point of view?"

"I mean to say," was my reply, "that it is very easy to be mistaken, for a man to think he has Christ's point of view when he has a very human conception of the most sacred things of life. If this is the origin of your trouble it can surely be easily disposed of. Pardon me, if I claim you have been misled and need to be informed. You are on the wrong track. You need to be started right."

"Perhaps you know better than I do what my trouble is," he conceded, "but I have my reservations, my misgivings, my doubts. You have not touched the surface. You think you have made quite a point. The perplexities lie farther back."

"Let us get at them," I urged, "and not stop until we have dealt with them in the light of what Christ has to say. Then both of us will be happy. Perhaps you can go away into a new ministerial life."

II

CHECKMATED BY TEAM-MATES

He seemed to be eager to continue by a show of reluctance to leave. He shifted his seat and appeared to settle down for another effort to get at what hid itself away in the background of his life.

“The thing I daily resent,” he began, “is that a man in the ministry is constantly confronted by the difficulty of doing what he ought to do. He is checkmated. He is opposed by narrow-minded people. He is not supported by the other ministers in the community. He cannot get team work on their part. He receives suspicion instead of coöperation.”

“This is surely a new angle to your difficulty,” I responded. “Perhaps there is your trouble. You have been defeated in realizing your ideals and the cause has not been in you any more than perhaps in a situation with which you have lost patience. You have become discouraged.”

“I do not know as to that,” he continued,

30 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

“but this is a fact. A well-trained man, giving himself to the modern program of the church will be beset by difficulties almost insurmountable. His own members will refuse to give him sympathetic support. They are frequently dull in their perceptions of what the world demands of the church. They are apathetic toward their pastor's appeal to make the church not only a religious but a social force in the community. It may appear strange but a man has to fight to do people good. He has to enlighten them repeatedly against their wills. After giving himself in unstinted service in their behalf the response is so meager as not only to discourage him but to aggravate him into refusing to give himself further in their behalf. This is not only my opinion. Many others could be found whose experience is similar to mine. If I could do what I desire for the church where I am pastor, I would make out of it one of the greatest influences for good in the community. But worldly-minded men and frivolous-minded women, too frequently, not only refuse to give themselves to the larger program of the modern church but oppose it with determined influence. But this is not half the situation. One might

bring himself to bear this by deciding it was part of his duty to bring these men and women around to his point of view and if he did not, to take it more as his fault than theirs. But another aggravation more serious and irritating is the attitude other ministers take toward you if your aggressiveness in the least encroaches upon the entire community. Let a young man, highly trained and prepared to give the widest possibly ministry go into such a community and it will not be long until he discovers that his larger service is not welcome because it interferes with others. If he is trained in religious education, so that he could lead the community movements, if he succeeds in formulating a plan in which all could coöperate, if he in the least shows a superior training and an ability that will give him the least advantage he runs into the jealousy of other ministers who oppose him at every opportunity. A young aggressive pastor with ability to lead and with training that makes him expert will find that the tendency is to narrow him to his denominational activities and to deny him those expansive opportunities that work for the good of the whole community.”

“So this is what you regard as a professional

32 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

limitation in the ministry," I replied. "Don't you realize that this is the experience of all professional men? It is true of the expert in medicine, or law, or politics. Men everywhere must suffer the demands of competition. The man who maintains himself in the midst of it survives. He who wearies and loses his patience goes down to defeat. But there is a more serious observation. The people do not look upon the ministry as a profession. They conceive of it as a sacrificial ministry. They resent the least appearance of professionalism. To them it is a divine calling. If you in your heart believe it to be one thing and by the demands for conformity seek to make it appear as something else in order to avoid private censure you are compelling yourself to live a lie. Furthermore, you must not forget that the Christian ministry is publicly judged by a different standard than that applied to the members of the professions. It is given privileges not accorded to any other class or group in society. Also, it is protected by restrictions that set it apart and differentiate it from all others. It is judged by absolute moral standards. The minister must live in the community without spot or blemish. He walks

among his people with a strong searchlight playing constantly upon him. Its penetration is never released from his conduct. He must be pure white. Gray morality with him quickly passes into black and announces his ruin. A man may be immoral and remain a doctor or a lawyer or a financier. Should he become a lying preacher, or a worldly-minded, a profane, or a lustful, or a thieving, or a double-dealing, or a deceitful, or a secularized preacher, he gives the community a moral shock that dislodges him from his high position and sends him head-long to the depths of reproach and shame. For on his altitude the one test is character, is morality. If he fails in this he fails in all. Therefore, if the ministry is a profession it is of a different kind than that commonly accepted among men. The ministry is not a social performance. It is not a highly particularized professional service. It is not a modified form of secular occupation performed in the name of the great spiritual realities. Its duties do not rise from human conditions but from divine endowments. The ministry a profession? Young man, in that conception lies the most dreadful peril. Professionalism is the tragedy of the ministry. The first

34 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

appearance of it portends wreckage. Beware of it as you would of pestilence and death!"

My earnestness held him as one driven to listen. His reactions were not perceptible. I felt impelled to continue. "Your trouble is not primarily in your conception of the ministry and the impulse that led you into it. While these have made a valuable contribution, the principal cause of your present difficulty is spiritual. You confess to having made a decision that will cut the line of connection to your highest aspirations. That determination means you surrender all inclination to travel the paths to the altitudes of your being. You announce yourself as having decided to settle on the level and to build your house on the approach to the depths. If you are precipitated therein you need not be surprised. Would you face this without deep concern? Why not turn again and seek to retrace your steps to a more secure position? Is there not possibly a remote field to your ministry which you have not seen? Manifestly, there is a great extent of reserve that has not yet been made known to you. What if you could discover that, after all, back and beyond the conception of the ministry as a profession

and an investment, lies the call of God, as fundamental, ineradicable and inevitable? If I could convince you of this would you not suspend your ultimate decision as to changing the course of your life? There are great spiritual realities that I believe still lie beyond your most vivid imagination. If you could be brought to see them, honestly, sincerely and with a humble heart, I think you could be directed into a path where you will be following Christ into a most satisfactory and valuable ministry."

"That may be true," he began, when he saw that I had reached a conclusion. "I have not closed my mind to further conviction and enlightenment. I do not want to acknowledge that I have made a mistake, that I have been defeated. I do so with reluctance. But I have all along felt there is considerable religious sentimentalism in looking upon the ministry as a calling. I have thought that in the realm of reality the conception of it as a profession and an investment was far more appealing to the growing mind. I shall not readily forsake this position. I have looked upon the ministry and witnessed its growth, as I thought, into an ever-widening field. The church looks upon the min-

36 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

ister as preacher, pastor, promoter, prophet, propagandist, pragmatist and general all round pretender in the field of the moral, religious, social and intellectual life. This made a profound impression and appeal to me. I did not think that in this conception rested the peril that would work the undoing of my idealism. I am not now ready to confess it has, but I am forced to acknowledge disappointment. I am going to have to change my conception of the minister or abandon it. It seems I cannot avoid this. It is the inevitable, the inexorable.”

This was the confession I had sought to draw from him. Now I dared go further in my probing.

“Have you thought that other men have remained in the ministry though they suffered a similar experience? Have you read ministerial biographies? Do you know of the struggles through which men of great spiritual power pass and how they remain unto the end faithful and true? Do you have any inner impression that you ought not to do this thing, that you cannot under God afford to turn your back upon his ministry? Do you ever have a sense of a sinking of heart and a darkening of mind and a feel-

ing of impending tragedy should you carry out your resolve? The man whom God calls to his service has within him Paul's cry of the spirit, 'Woe, woe is me, if I preach not his gospel!'"

"No, I cannot say that I have had that experience," was his frank reply. "My regret comes from the fact that I have been checkmated, that I have suffered defeat, that I have not been appreciated, that I have not succeeded. I am now more perplexed by what I am going to do with my life than I am over the raising of that emotional question. I have looked upon that conception as not being a worthy motive. That will do for an uneducated man. That served a purpose perhaps for a former generation but to say that the minister 'is called' is to throw the whole matter into the realm of such unreality that all lovers of reasonable truth must refuse to accept it."

I saw no other way to force him out of the position he had taken than that of compelling him to face the implications of his own confession. "You have unconsciously revealed your ministerial motive," I insisted. "You confess that your regret comes from the feeling that you have been checkmated and from the realization

38 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

that you have suffered defeat. Your trouble is where I expected to find it. Will you permit me to say it without hesitation, even though it may not sound in the least courteous? Your ministry is ego-centric. You have been checkmated. You have suffered defeat. That is what hurts. That is what makes the wound. You—ego—checkmated, defeated. You invested and lost. You committed yourself and have been disappointed. You took a chance. You played for margins. You gambled on an uncertain outcome. You—Ego—You—you have been 'cleaned out' by the forces against which you wagered your powers. When the process of the 'Ins and Outs' and the 'Ups and Downs' began, you lost and ran for cover. You are now suffering the pangs of an investor's hell. Perhaps for the first time in your life, you have encountered something wrong from which you need to be saved. The first impulse is to surrender, when you rather should rise to assert yourself, calling upon all your powers to struggle until victory comes. Your deepest regret should be that at a moment of crisis you have not been a 'good minister of Jesus Christ.' You should be alarmed, not by

what you think, not by what you feel, but rather by what he thinks of your failure, by what attitude he takes toward your let-down. You have made the fundamental mistake that seems inevitable to the man who looks upon the ministry as an investment and a profession. If this were all it might not be so deeply regrettable, but the acknowledgment of this conception in a crisis of a minister's life, reveals that he has a wrong idea of what it means to be a Christian."

"You are going beyond the bounds of endurance," he burst out resentfully, "to claim that I am fundamentally wrong in my conception of the Christian life, as you did about my ideas of the fundamental interpretation of the ministry. It is presumptuous and unkind. I resent it. Fair dealing, or none at all," he protested, wheeling in his chair as though to leave.

He was perceptibly moved. Perhaps I had gone too far, presumed too much, and spoiled my advantage. I had aroused him. He was alert emotionally as well as mentally. I had wounded his self-confidence and assaulted his scholastic conceit. He was inwardly resisting the light. However, he was on the defensive. He could not afford to retire under fire.

III

BITTER RESENTMENT

“Wait a moment,” I urged. “I beg your pardon. I must go further. You must hear me through, even though you do not enjoy or believe what I say. I must confess that I am convinced that you have not gotten down to fundamentals. Mark you, I do not mean the spiritual life or the religious life. I mean the Christian life. A man betrays his position when he confesses that he looks upon the ministry as a profession. A man cannot preach the real Gospel of Jesus Christ unless he has received something from Christ to preach. Christian preaching should come from a religious experience based upon a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. When a man enters into this experience there comes a subtle spiritual power into his life which gives the message he must deliver. It burns his soul. He has an urgency that impels him to preach it and press it upon others. A man without an experience of being saved himself cannot preach the

blessings of a Saviour. A man does not become a Christian as a matter of preference. What high-minded man would not prefer to follow Christ rather than to serve the devil? Any scribe or Pharisee might rise to this level. Do not even the publicans and the sinners do the same? There is no merit in this. Preferential salvation is not Christian. It is fundamentally redemptive. The Christian faith is personal. It is faith born in a transaction. It is not the committing one's thought in assent to any proposition, but the trusting of one's being to a Being, there to be rested, kept, guided, molded, governed and possessed forever. You do not see it? You smile at my old-fashioned putting of it? Listen, I cannot deviate from this course of thought. Has it ever occurred to you that there is such a thing as natural religion and natural spirituality which manifest themselves in tastes and instincts that might determine the decision of a man to enter the ministry? Has it ever occurred to you that there are religious and spiritual forces in the world that grow out of man's nature? Have you ever observed that a man's religious and spiritual life may be based entirely upon the functioning of his higher in-

42 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

instincts and may be accounted for by the operations of his physical endowments?"

"I would certainly answer these questions with an affirmative," he consented, as he saw I was getting on familiar ground. "To me the spiritual life is an unfolding. It has a natural basis and I do not hesitate to say that I believe in a psycho-physiological spiritual life. There is no need of making room for a third factor. I have committed myself to this with all my heart."

"But do you not see the implications of your position?" I begged. "That lowers Christianity to the level of all other religions and denies its claim of being something extra, distinctive and differentiated. If you are right our belief that God has come across the spaces between the material and spiritual universes by an incarnation, namely Jesus Christ, is misleading and the contention that the Christian life carries an element of supernaturalism and spirituality not generated in ourselves is a deception. Let us bear down upon this point for a moment. There are religions in the world that satisfy the natural instincts of man. Have these not gathered multiplied millions of followers? We cannot

discount the integrity of their appeal. History supports the claim that they have held nations and races under their control and developed in them distinctive characteristics. Is Christianity simply another religion? Is it the culmination of the spirit that is found in all the others? Is it earth-born or heaven-given? Is it a racial, a national, or the one world religion? Is it not verily true that a man can believe in Deity and not be a Christian? One can believe in the God of the Old Testament and still not be a Christian. He may be a Hebrew or a Mohammedan. Is it not possible for a man to be living what he considers the Christian life and still not be a Christian? May it not be possible for him to be living a religious life on the level of the Jew or the Moslem? Has it ever appeared to you that as Christianity stands in the midst of all the religions of the world and especially those of the Jehovistic group its chief claim is that of a supernatural religion? Jesus Christ is the issue Christianity creates among the religions of the world. It offers through faith in him the most satisfactory experience of God that is possible for the human soul. It declares his centrality as the finality of religious faith. It insists that to

44 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

know him by surrender of the self, through acknowledgment of moral alienation from God brings an inner certainty and assurance that passeth all understanding. Shall we say then that the most perplexing question is, When is a man religious? Nay, it is rather, When is a man Christian? This can be answered by raising another question, What did Christ come into the world to do? There may be many answers, but this one must ultimately be accepted, he came into the world to save sinners. Parry this as we may, tear it asunder, thrust it from us, substitute for it as we are prone to do, nevertheless, the reason for his coming is found in the ravages of sin among men. The greatest problem in man's life is sin. The greatest struggle is for righteousness. The densest darkness is that of iniquity. The most intense hunger is that for the assurance of forgiveness. Men soon find a judgment day marked on the calendars of their souls. The great fear rises from that anticipation. Christianity claims that a benevolent and gracious God has provided against that awful day by sending his own son into the world to save those who would entrust themselves to him. Jesus Christ came into the world to save,

to rescue and to restore, to accomplish forgiveness for those who stand indited before the bar of their consciences, to exercise the power of a redeemer, to enter into the religious experiences of men as proof that when repentant and trusting they may by faith in him find a forgiving and helpful God. This is what Christianity means in its distinctive teaching. This is what it is as differentiated from all other religions. What then is it to be a Christian? To know Jesus Christ in a personal religious experience as redeemer and Lord. Can any man be said to know him if he has not met him in the forgiveness of his sins? If he accepts the invitation to the feast which Jesus Christ sends out, and responds to it by coming into the church to enjoy all the good things provided, can he be said to have received all that is intended if he does not meet the Master of the Feast himself?"

"Yes, but now," he arose to contend, "you are getting back into that field of emotional Christianity and supernatural religion that I have set aside as an unnecessary factor in the religious life of to-day. Do you expect me to believe that my ministry has come to its present undesirable state because I have not had some stereotyped

46 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

and standardized experience so common in a former generation? If you do then I must have my reservations, if you seek to get me to commit myself to your position. Why should man approach Christ over the sin-path? Why should I be compelled to think of him always in the light of wrong-doing? Why not think of Christ as a great example, as a great soul, as a great revelator? It is repellent to me to think of that beautiful life in relation to the ugliness of sin."

"But do you not realize," I insisted, "that at the last analysis his relation to every man is on this basis?"

"I do not accept that position," he declared. "Why should a man be compelled to look upon the fundamental experience that makes a man Christian as being that of the consciousness of sin? I say that you are trying to throw back the beginning of the Christian life upon an outworn formula. Do you mean to lay emphasis upon an emotional crisis as the beginning of the Christian life?"

"I mean to lay emphasis upon the fact that the Christian life begins with the consciousness of the need of Christ as a Saviour. Remember, Christian faith is the faith of a transaction. I

am driven to this by the reading of Christ's Word. All men need him because they are sinners. He did not come to redeem some men from sin and be an example and inspiration to others because they were not sinners. He came to mankind because sin was running in human life as a deep and dark current. The Garden of Eden drama is acted out in every man's life. It was not given to Adam and Eve to fall once and for all. They introduced the incident of a moral fall into the human life. That experience comes to every son of Adam from the days of Abel to the birth hour of the last human child. Every man passes through the experience of the fall. Therefore sin becomes a reality in every life."

"I recognize this as an ancient conception," he conceded. "Do you mean to force this upon me as fundamental? Must I accept this position if I am to get your conception of what it means to be a Christian? All men are not sinners. The world does not take Christ's duality of the sheep and the goats as true. That is an ugly metaphor whose gullibility lies within the realm of possibility in thought only for the low and vulgar. We have many people to-day who are morally colorless, who live midway between

48 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

right and wrong and cannot be said to be either good or bad. In the judgment there will be a middle class much larger than either of the other two or perhaps both. God will not have his trouble in dealing with the wicked, but his perplexity will be in disposing of those who have been neither good nor bad, black nor white, sheep nor goats."

"Yes, I am familiar with this idea," I responded. "Kipling saw this great dilemma of the moral universe and incorporated it in his poem, 'TOMLINSON,' in which he relates the story of a man who was not good enough for Heaven, nor bad enough for hell. But a familiarity with the teachings of Jesus obviously disposes of this problem. He did not look upon sin as a matter of degree. No man, to him, could be morally colorless, because in reality no man is. Sin is moral leprosy. When is a man a leper? Not until the germ has developed in him and removed the ends of his fingers and turned the hair upon his head white and revealed itself by big knots upon the back of his neck and in great ugly welts upon his forehead? A man is a leper when he has one germ of the disease in his blood. He may carry it for years. No one may

suspect him of having it when suddenly it is discovered that something is eating away his vitality and has been working upon him imperceptibly for years. A man is a sinner when he has the germ of sin in his life. He does not need to be an outbreaking sinner who shocks the community and shames his friends. It is the bacilli of sin that makes a sinner. What this is has been the greatest theological problem. Men have sought to segregate it. They have not succeeded. However, in their efforts they have gathered an accumulation of evidence that its presence pervades the entire human race. They have gained conclusions that support the contention of the Holy Scriptures that 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' They have even confirmed that word of Saint John when he wrote, 'If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.' "

These are strong words. The present day thinker does not receive them readily. Indeed the unregenerate mind, the unspiritual mind, resents their implication, because it looks upon sin as a matter of degree and does not willingly acknowledge turpitude.

IV

BITTER ACKNOWLEDGMENT

At this point the young man seemed unable to restrain himself. I had either struck a sore spot in his moral nature or I had violated some intellectual principle of his faith that made him resent almost violently what I was saying.

“I think that conception an outrage against the moral integrity of the human race—‘the leprosy of sin,’” he almost hissed. His irony flashed fire. “Sin as leprosy in the blood was not a figure used by Jesus Christ. You seem to be seeking to draw me into the pit of sin. You are too personal. I do not understand you. All men have not sinned. What are you seeking to do? You will be calling me a sinner before you are through. Don’t rob humanity of its respectability. If you are aiming to shatter my self-respect and brand me as a wrongdoer I advise you to stop at once.”

Evidently his defenses were down. I was getting too close home for his comfort. He was dodging and hunting for escape. Something

in him had given way. He was backing in the direction I had sought to push him. The advantage was mine. I must not stop until I had brought him to a decision that he was wrong and needed desperately that which he had theoretically preached unto others.

“You cannot avoid it,” I went on, assuming my former line of thought, “if you seek to follow the record of Scripture. Sin and salvation are conceptions most intimately associated with the life and purpose of Jesus Christ. No matter who we are and from whence we come we cannot separate ourselves from the need of his salvation. There is with many believers a time and a place where they claim they found saving grace. That record on the calendar may mean very much but it does not complete the work of Christ in and for us. The work of salvation in a modified form must be a continuous process. After we have found him or he has rescued us from the ravages of a condemning consciousness of sin, we are constantly exposed to the experience of *being lost by losing*. At times we lose our patience and Christ must save us from the evil results of the same. At other times we lose our faith, our courage, our hope, our confidence,

52 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

our love, our tolerance, our optimism, our consecration, our devotion, our intensity, our spirituality, and Christ must save us from the evil results. For after we have come to know him as our Lord we are still exposed to the possibility of being lost again and again by losing. Has this truth ever confronted you, demanding to be adopted as an article of your faith? He gave us this truth in the story of the prodigal son who was separated from his father's house by losing. He lost his regard for his father's care. He lost his love for his brother, for the home ties and the home restraints. He lost his appreciation of the fellowship of his own kindred. By these different processes of losing he lost his place, his patrimony, his purity and moral character and found himself at the last among the swine, hungry and in rags. *He was lost by losing.* We do not stop to ask why he first began to lose. The great question with a man who has found faith in Jesus Christ is not, Have I been saved? but rather, Am I being saved? It is more important that a man know he is being saved from the evil results of losing than to know that he was once upon a time in the near or the remote past saved from a lost estate. This is the prob-

lem of the minister. He is not of the lost, but he may be one of those who is suffering daily from losing. In this experience he must know the saving grace of faith in Jesus Christ or ultimately be found among the ruined. If I should make this personal where would the truth apply to your present experience? You are suffering from losing. You have lost the way by losing your patience, your resolution, your devotion, your faith, your light, your aspirations, your optimism. You have become lost by losing. You are unhappy and refuse to acknowledge the cause. You are facing the crisis of your career and blindly approach a precipice. If you fail to attend my warning you are lost. What should you do? About face. Where should you turn? To Christ. What should you seek? Forgiveness and guidance. What will happen? You will come for the first time in your life to know what Jesus Christ is as a Saviour. You will find a rapturous joy. Then you will have something vital to preach. You will have a burning message. You will come to know that a Christian's faith is the faith of a transaction. You will enter upon a new ministry."

54 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

This was crowding him closely along lines he had passed without feeling they had any application to him. But he saw the truth. I had held up the Word of Christ as a mirror and he had seen his own face. He did not like it. The application was too personal.

“Do you mean to say,” he replied tensely, “that I have missed in my thinking and preaching the reason for which Jesus Christ appeared, and have become the victim of my own mistakes? I must confess that I think this is entirely superficial. In my interpretation of Christianity I have laid more stress on righteousness than on sin, more emphasis on Christ’s example than upon his suffering atonement. If I accept what you offer I shall be compelled to shift the center of my thinking. I have thought of the Christian life as spirito-centric. The great avenues of the spiritual life open up as eyes to receive the light. In their development they reach the stage where they are ready to accept. They open and behold—The Christ. You ask me to make my life Christo-centric and then write across it the word—SIN, as though that conception contained the entire significance and purpose of the Christian religion.”

He could scarcely restrain his disapprobation. His feeling rose almost to an expression of aversion. How could Christ, his ideal, be associated in his mind with sin? He had not realized that he was exposing himself to spiritual incapacity, and dispositional harshness, to the indictment of committing himself to the most heinous vice of the spiritual order. Seeing his position I pressed further the truth that I might bring him to see his need of Jesus Christ and cause him to turn to him as rescuer in time of distress.

“What has your spiritual life meant to you?” I continued. “Has it meant struggle and failure and victory? Perhaps as a minister you have lived the intellectual life thinking that was what the Scripture means by the spiritual life? Perhaps you have not realized that the spiritual life is as much a struggle as that of the physical. Spiritually we survive by fitness. And spiritual fitness is wrought by our struggle. There come into man’s spiritual life daily strong vital forces as dynamic as though in material form. They play about his motives, they incite his impulses with as much regularity and determination as though they were canister and steel projectile. If a man lives regardless of them they will work

56 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

his undoing. Especially is this true of the minister. He is the center of the spiritual life of the community. All evil forces converge by attraction toward the central pole of radiation of good influences. When he darkens the shadows fall. He must be prepared for the swift moving currents that appear in the community among the social forces. They will finally turn center and break upon him. He must be sensitive toward sinister influences. For malice and hatred and selfishness and aggrandizement and pessimism and cynicism and jealousy and covetousness and pride and anger and moroseness and love of luxury and ease and idleness and indolence and indifference and secularity, all these and many more at times storm the citadel of the spiritual purity of the minister's life. He stands exposed where these play upon him with terrible ravages. If his life is not hid with Christ in God his fine sensibilities will deaden while his hopes and ideals will be consumed in the flame and be gathered as ashes in his life. All the great evangelists of a former generation were accustomed to say that the spiritual life, as we know it, on its higher levels, needs to be frequently humbled, reconvicted, and broken down

before God. They conceive of the Christian aspirations and impulses as becoming crusted over, as settling and losing their resiliency and exquisite relish for things divine. They claimed that the unction and inclination to pray at times abated, and that the emotional nature lost its keen responsiveness and its delight and enthusiasm over spiritual things. Therefore they urged that frequently there should be a breaking up of the emotional life and a tugging at the faith lines to save the soul from the deadening influences of the downward pull of the passions and physical impulses and social contacts. They were more successful than we to-day in bringing our fathers back to the fundamentals of the spiritual life. For with them it was a struggle even unto death."

Again he shifted in his chair and started to speak. He was still in the spirit of dissent. It was only for a moment.

"Why this struggle?" he protested. "I have thought that the Christian life was a way of peace and satisfaction."

"Have you found it so?" I interjected.

"Can't say that I have," was his laconic reply. "Now that you have thrown light upon it I feel

58 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

that it has been one long struggle with me. I have never seen it from this point of view. Struggle? Why? I see it, but how can a man bring himself to be reconciled to it? How could I preach that gospel?"

"That gospel is the gift of God," I assured him. "To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. That was part of his plan. You must learn the lesson of reconciliation. You have not thought of this? You must be reconciled to God's way. All those elements of character you prize so highly, courage, persistence, endurance, optimism, and patience and unselfishness, are the products of spiritual struggle. If you recognize weak-spiritedness or cowardice or surrender as the outstanding spiritual vices, you surely should not consider yourself without sin. The great virtue of struggle is to struggle. The great vice is to surrender. Weigh the baseness of surrender. Could such a statement be repeated in your presence without striking the edge of your conscience? Can you stand in the presence of Christ and not feel the shame of your ceasing to struggle, your giving up, your weak-spiritedness, your cowardice? *The great vice of the spiritual order is sur-*

render. You have descended to that depth.”

Suddenly the storm gathering within him broke. He was overwhelmed with emotion. Something had happened. I was startled. My words had broken through. He rested his face in his hands and spoke as if to himself. “Lost by losing—” His eyes filled, his lips tightened. He bit down words that raged for expression. He ejaculated, “What have I not lost by losing? O God, have I committed the greatest vice of the spiritual order? Surrender, weak-spiritedness, cowardice? I am betrayed. What shall I do? O Lord, who will save me from this hour?”

That was the moment for which I had waited. I answered, “Jesus Christ, Lord, Saviour! Look to Him.”

My voice startled him. He quickly recovered himself as from a distracting dream, rose to his feet, changed his attitude and smiled.

“Pardon me for this momentary loss of self-control,” he said, apologizing, as he extended his hand to terminate the interview. “It was bitter. I see a new light. I will go home and test out these truths you have given me about Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. I will fight it through at all costs.”

60 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

He was gone. He went out as one stricken by the light. It had left him haggard. It had made him uncertain of step. He walked as one weary after a taxing adventure. Would he return among the prophets of the Lord who have been conquered by the light? Was he going out to strike the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, where in the darkness he would hear the sobbing of that infinite human anguish that breaks upon the ears of those recently awakened?

Would he find the road to Damascus? Would he be overtaken by that enlargement of mind caused by the inbreaking of light? Would he suffer the reduction that comes by the seizure of soul wrought by the conquest of truth? It was altogether possible that he might appear again among all those to whom justice has revealed itself, among all those from whom blindness has been removed, among all those triumphant searchers after conviction, among all the great adventurers who have traveled the paths of virtue, among all those servants of the good and the beautiful who have been taught the way by the acknowledgment of a personal faith in Jesus Christ.

PART II: LOOKING INTO THE
DEPTHS

“Take away the minister’s spiritual power, and though you give us the fairest deportment, the richest eloquence, the most subtle and fascinating speculation, you leave us without any sense that we are hearkening to a man of God. Did the multitudes of the Christian church only set due estimate upon this, and rank propriety and intellectualism in their proper place, the idea that a man can pass creditably as a minister merely by carefully performing a ceremony, or by weaving webs of curious and cunning language, would be as far from men’s minds as is now the idea that one can obtain credit as a soldier without courage, as a painter without skill of hand, or as a musician without an instinct of tune.”

WILLIAM ARTHUR.

Part II: Looking into the Depths

Perils of Present Day Ministry

I watched the young minister as he hastened away. I knew more about his work than he thought. His confession was the fulfillment of my expectations. For a number of years he had been heading directly for a crisis and perhaps a fall. He did not know it. He would not have listened should any one have warned him. He was living a self-centered life. Driving down the road of his career he took little heed of speed or of whom he was passing. He had his chief delight in the feeling that he was getting somewhere. Suddenly a turn in the road brings him to a halt. He discovers that the exhilaration he has had came from his haste and not from a sense of satisfaction that he was going in the right direction and was taking something worthwhile along with him. He had outdistanced others whose fellowship he had enjoyed on part of the journey. While on the

64 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

other section he had struck a tangent that led him from the main path and had brought him in the midst of the entanglements of an individualism that had awakened him to the consciousness that not only his fellows had left him, but even the sense of God's presence had forsaken him.

I had sought to bring him face to face with his serious situation. He had followed me reluctantly and at times protestingly. I had crowded him into one confusing position after another. He had finally broken down under the realization that the ministry was not a deceiving allurements and the church wrong in its dealings with its youth; and had partially acknowledged that he had made a mistake, that he had deceived himself, that he was working under selfish motives, that he had committed the greatest sin against the spiritual order, that he had lost many of the valuable things of the spiritual life by losing. He had faced this truth with a shock. Then he had shut it out as it had sought to produce an emotional storm and withdrew from my presence. He had gone away to be like Jacob struggling beneath the stars.

When again alone I could not dismiss from my

mind his suffering face. Had I gotten anywhere with him? What had he gone out to do? Would he go away to forget his conversation with me? He had assured me he would postpone the execution of his resolution to abandon the ministry. That could be regarded as valuable. But was it final? Postponement of a resolution of that kind based upon a test and a further try-out was very questionable. For a man cannot go forward in the ministry if he holds reservations, that if it works out to suit him, he will go on with it, and if it does not he will quit. I knew that resignation to it was the only safe policy. He was going back to assume the duties of his ministry with reservations. What would be the outcome? He was going to put Jesus Christ to the test as a Saviour. Would he really? Could he on the basis of a laboratory method? He had resolved to try out the meaning of the spiritual struggle. He was going to fight it through by the help of Jesus Christ. Would he? Did he see his way? Could he find it if he did not see it? Would he take others into his council and reveal in the least the weakness of his life? He had been so self-sufficient he had not done so.

66 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

Would he do it now? Not every man can sustain himself in a moral struggle. Indeed inner conflicts are not continued by the volitions. They seize the will. If he seeks to repress them they intensify. If he prays to be delivered from them they push him to his knees. Any man who has felt the inexorable demands of a spiritual struggle understands what is meant. It cannot be thrown off until it has finished its course by bringing its subject to a satisfying victory, or by expending its energy in a fatal ending that leaves the bitterness of cynicism from which there is no recovery. Therefore, to surrender willingly to an inner battle with the resolution that it shall be fought through to a decisive victory requires moral energy that cannot be released save by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. This is what St. Paul meant when he cried out: "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin," and assured himself with the words: "The Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." There was no way by which I could further help him. I must leave him with Providence. When would I hear from him again?

I

WHEN MINISTERS FALL

I sat looking down into the depths following the descent over which I had seen almost a score of ministers pass during the last six years. At the end was shame and ruin. I had witnessed the maneuvers of a number of others as they walked about the brink and saw them save themselves by turning away with blanched faces and hasten to assume with abandonment the duties to which God had called them. I had witnessed that tragedy in the ministry that establishes the gallows of Haman as a necessity in the moral universe; men who preach to others surrender to iniquities that humiliate the face of righteousness and corrupt the entire order of which they are a conspicuous part; men who have preached to others become themselves cast-aways, fall into the pit from which they have warned others, commit the very crimes they have condemned and become worthy of the same punishments they have prophesied were being laid up for others. I have seen ministers

68 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

fall. This is the ever-recurring mystery of the spiritual universe. Ministers are ruined. They are built of such material that it is possible for them to collapse. Ministers sometimes end their careers in regret and grief. They are human. They are no less reprehensible. The farther the fall, the more extensive the ruin. The more unexpected the tragedy, the greater the demerit, the greater the condemnation. It is easy to fall from the altitudes and it is fraught with irreparable disaster.

Was the great theatrical manager right when he claimed, speaking in defense of the stage, that there were more preachers in jail in this country than actors? Perhaps he was. An actor can break many of our moral laws and society is silent. He does not claim to ascend to any moral heights. He cannot have any serious falls. All his moral delinquencies are mere stumbles. He staggers, gains his equilibrium and goes on as though nothing had happened. The law in dealing with an actor as a last resort sends him to jail. Public opinion does not require a high moral standard of him. It frequently permits him to go free when, if he had his just dues, he would be incarcerated. He has

opportunity to cover up his tracks if he wanders into meanness. He is simply fulfilling the expectation of men when he is morally irregular. He makes no claim to piety. Hence much is not expected of him. If he can maintain himself within the limits of respectability he has no trouble about going to jail.

Yes, there may be more ministers in prison to-day than actors. If this is true it is not because either have received their just dues. It does not prove or disprove the superior moral value of either. It does, however, support the claim that ministers are judged by a higher moral standard. They are dealt with by a more stringent code of ethics. The least deviation from the straight path and they are disqualified. The loss of moral balance precipitates them to a ruinous depth. They live in moral altitudes. The higher they go, the more perilous their position. A slip, a stumble, a mistake, a lapse, and they are gone, over the precipice, down from the heights, falling toward the depths in tragedy to ruin. More ministers fail morally than actors, because they seek moral perfection. The man who never attempts to rise never falls. We believe the efficient theatrical manager will

70 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

concede there are more bad actors than good actors. Will he not in all fairness acknowledge there are more good ministers than bad ministers? The clean, idealistic actor is the exception. The immoral minister is an exception.

There is no reasonable association in unprejudiced thought between the career of a minister and an actor. The former abandons himself to living the spiritual life. The latter commits himself to living a double life—what he himself is in reality and what he assumes to be in the rôle of the theatrical artist. This one thing I do, resolves the minister—Live the Christ Life. All these rôles I resolve to play, declares the actor, Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief. Both face the same inevitable decrees. When the actor becomes a preacher he fails; when the preacher becomes an actor, he is ruined. The actor claims he is not what he pretends to be. The minister never pretends but seeks to be what he appears to be. This is to the actor's credit. In the minister it is failure.

They are judged by two different standards. The minister by that of a perfect moral code in which the personal element enters profoundly. The actor by that of the perfection of his art.

II

THE CRITICAL HOURS

The minister's life is one of arduous conquest. He begins on the level of humanity where man struggles against the force that would reduce the physical life to impotence. He must give himself to it with abandon. He is out to dominate, to subjugate. Having gained control over the physical he advances to the moral life, resolving he will master there. The struggle sets in. The fury of a conflict rages about him. He is thrust in upon an ascent for which he must have a passion or fail. He gains ground and establishes himself. He sights the social life and sets his forces to gain its level and maintain himself there. From this altitude he discovers the intellectual life and turns all his forces to gaining its level. Then above all, and over all, and apparently beyond the reach of all, appears the wide, expanding region of the spiritual life. He anticipates that conquest. He prepares to ascend to that elevation. He is caught by the fury of the struggle. Spiritual whirlwinds

72 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

sweep about him. The ascent is beset by infinite difficulties. He must go forth alone meeting passion, hunger, restlessness, burning discontent. He must be prepared to be stricken by vertigo, to suffer from stupefaction. He must search for the divine fire and consent to die, to be consumed. He must struggle onward and upward until he discovers that imperishable decree written on the promontories of immortality, "The names of the great preachers are the names of men who have struggled unto blood, resisting passions within and temptations without."

In a correct conception of the Christian ministry we are confronted by the necessity of accepting the conclusion that when it is lived as a spirit-led and spirit-inspired life, it is beset by one crisis after another, that it expands and advances from level to level, from strata to strata, by struggle, by conflict, by insistence, by determined resolution, by one continuous effort to maintain the life at its full capacity. Looking at the ministry from this point of view I find there are four crises through which all the great preachers have passed in their struggle for expression and in their efforts to find those levels

where their souls could attain delight and enjoy that renewal of communion with God that brings them their coveted inspiration. There is first, *The Moral Crisis*. This is closely related to the physical life, registering itself in the struggles of the moral will to gain control over the instincts and passions of the physical man. Second, *The Intellectual Crisis*, which is brought on by the effort to think into a satisfactory system the tenets of the Christian faith. Third, *The Spiritual Crisis* that is produced by the effort of the human spirit to find daily communion with God through faith in and obedience to the will of Jesus Christ. Fourth, *The Vocational Crisis*, that appears during the mature years imperiling the control of the master passion of a minister's life.

Our libraries hold the biographies of many great preachers. All along the line comes the confession of great victories through great crises. We may begin with our Lord himself, struggling through his temptation in the wilderness to his wrestling in Gethsemane, when his sweat was made incarnadine by his agony, and pass to Saul of Tarsus and hear him cry out in his distress, "O wretched man that I am, who shall

74 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

deliver me from the body of this death?" Pass to Savonarola and witness his struggle to stand by the message the Spirit had given him for the gay Florentines. Pass to Luther and John Calvin and John Knox and ask the question, Who were these men? Men who lived on the spiritual frontier, where life's fierce battles rage. Call them and they will appear, battered, scarred, marked, worn by many conflicts. Pass to John and Charles Wesley. You see Aldersgate and hear John say, "Then was my heart strangely warmed. Then for the first time I knew my sins forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ." Then you hear Lecky, the secular historian, record, "That hour at Aldersgate was one of the turning points in the world's history." Pass to Cardinal Newman, to Horace Bushnell, to Henry Ward Beecher, to R. J. Campbell, to W. E. Orchard, and the same record is found. In life's critical hours the spirit of the man dedicated to the ministry of Jesus Christ finds itself in a crisis through which it enters into a renewed life on higher levels, as a pilgrim seeking his path, through the trackless wastes in search of the dwelling place of God. These rose into the heights and stood sun-crowned. There are those

who lose their way and go down. *Earth has no scene so sad as when some minister forgets that Christ has taken vows for him and plunges into the mire.*

THE MORAL CRISIS

The moral crisis is the most fundamental that appears in the minister's life. It affords him his first opportunity for conquest. It must be registered as a decisive victory, or the enemies that lurk in the animal passions will threaten him with early defeat. If dealt with leniently they will hide themselves away in the hours when the better self is in control, but as weakness comes and moral laxity prevails they stand forth like the beasts of the jungle and lay waste the life in animalism and shame. Men are prone not to take this situation into consideration. If there is one indictment that can be made against the church it is that there has been too much complacency about the moral security of its ministry. We have not appreciated the character of the innumerable perils to which its members are daily exposed. We do not realize that the moral standard of Christianity is exceedingly hard on human nature. Men are con-

76 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

stantly either breaking under its demands for unattainable excellency or are struggling midst prayers and penitence to satisfy them. All believers carry the hidden consciousness which if they should confess would register that they have not attained, that they have fallen far short and that in themselves they are utterly incapable of attaining perfection. The entire field of human nature must be worked over—regenerated—before the least approach can be made to it. And yet, under this teaching and controlled by this influence, which should make us long-suffering and patient and forgiving, we are unyielding in our demands for perfection, merciless in our dealing with delinquencies, unforgiving before the appeal of repentance and uncompassionate before the humiliating confession. We seldom fail to refer to a man's sin as though eternal judgment had been pronounced upon him, treat him as though he were forever beyond recovery, even though we believe in divine grace and the restoration of the erring through faith in Jesus Christ. Knowing that the offender is flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, confessing that he is intensely human, we require of him that degree of moral

uprightness no man can attain apart from constant divine aid. *Judged by the standards of human nature the immaculate character of the minister in a community is a continuous miracle.* This we are prone to rigidly require of him at the threat of his ruin. However, should he lay claim to any superior perfection we at once condemn him. He is made to walk alone on the heights and at the same time come in daily contact with human nature on the level where it battles with passions, instincts and physical impulses. He is required to be acclimated in the heights and yet to retain that responsiveness to the storm and stress periods of life that he may enter them with immunity and survive their fiercest blasts. He must exercise the wisdom of an archangel. Unguarded moments imperil him. Temporary weakness exposes him to repeated attacks of the earth-pull that seeks to rob him of his aspirations to walk with God and live the sacrificial life. If he surrenders to the least spirit of indifference, if he gives down, if he settles, ceasing to struggle, circumstances victimize him. Sometimes without the least anticipation the intensity of his enthusiasm betrays him. The warmth of his heart

78 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

proves a snare. The sin he condemns suddenly turns and seizes upon him. His opposition to it as seen in the life of others proves to have been the outward manifestation of the inner resistance he was making in his own life. Suddenly he breaks. He is forced aside from the main issue of his ministry. His conscience loses its keen edge, his moral nature fails to react against the least appearance of evil, his spiritual perceptions become dull, prayer fails to rise with intensity upon his lips, his emotions slowly respond to the appeal of his ideal. He loses his elevation. He sinks to the depth. He is submerged. He is engulfed. Stunned, shocked, he asserts himself to resist. He resolves to struggle back. Power has passed from him. He is as one held. His old vigor disappears. Helpless, he discovers he has fallen into the net set for the wicked. He is apprehended, indicted. He can produce no defense. He has sinned but not intentionally. He is guilty but not by premeditation. He has lost his way as one blinded. The contagion he has fought has seized upon him. The plague he was seeking to stamp out has victimized him. The remedies he urged upon others fail upon himself.

I have seen such a man stand as if inwardly stricken, numbed, deadened, paralyzed, with no expression of realization of the enormity of his moral defalcation. I have discovered a protest, a resentment that he should be so dealt with. I have seen him cover his sin with a lie in his efforts at concealment. Behold, how are the mighty fallen! How are the righteous traduced! How are the watchmen on the towers of Zion betrayed into the hands of their enemies! Where is the way of escape? If there has been a moral fall, there is none save that of forgiveness. The man goes down, and never again recovers the former heights that once inspired him. The psychologist pronounces it a case of moral nerves and recommends a sanitarium. The man of God looks upon the ruins and recalls the words of David in his penitential psalms when his conscience had been laid open by an ugly gash from the sword of lust and sin, "I acknowledge my transgression and my sin is ever before me. Create within me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me, cast me not away from thy presence and take not thy holy spirit from me." A confession of repentance that finds the way to restoration.

80 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

A clean heart and a right spirit and a humble dependence upon Christ as a daily corrector of the delinquencies of the life form the circle in which the virtue of the man of God must find its exercise. It is located in the heights. It dwells in an atmosphere highly sensitized. It grows under a divine impulsion as a thing apart.

For accept it as we will, a minister's moral virtue should be as attractive as a maiden's modesty. He fain would not be sexless. That would make him a monk and associate him with the drab of the nun, or mark him as possessing the listless passion of the eunuch. He must be a man, but not a virginal youth in whom the fires of passion are yet to burn. He must be a man, but being such, maintain that chasteness which throws the glow of chastity about him.

He must maintain his inner life with the original of an unblown flower whose purity is a whiteness in the shade, whose delicateness is the inmost cell of a closed lily which ought not to be seen by man before it has been looked upon by the sun. For there is a virtue that is afraid of itself. It retires before the most casual gaze. It takes alarm at the least exposure, like the

modest maiden who partially drapes her beauty during her morning ablutions, whose white foot even takes refuge in a slipper, whose bosom veils itself even before the mirror lest it have eyes to see, whose flowing garment is quickly drawn to hide her shoulders at the crackling of the furniture, whose ribbons are hastily tied, hooks nervously clasped, lacings drawn, whose heart leaps, whose breathing becomes perceptible, who starts and shivers as with cold. There is the presence of modesty, there is that exquisite shyness, that winged thing called subtle anxiety of virtue when approached by the scrutiny of the searching eye. It cannot be touched without spoliation.

The chasteness of virtue in the minister's life should be as delicate as the down of the peach, as the dust of the plum, as the pollen of the flower, as the radiated crystal of the snow, as the powdered wing of the butterfly; and yet as strong as the wing of an albatross, as penetrating as a ray of light, as flashing as a display of lightning, as powerful as the tides of the sea, as irresistible as the will of God, as threatening as the day of his judgment, as commanding as his majesty, as enchanting as the reward

82 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

of his mercy, and as assuring as the proffer of his forgiveness.

For the minister's virtue is a thing of reality and not a chimera of the soul. It is not a fanciful dream born in the virginal struggles of a youth wrestling against the rising register of the ardent juices, that suppressed, fill the brain with visionary wraiths. For the hungers of love come from below, they do not come across. They seek for release, they ask not for satisfaction. They resent control, they are born for imperial destiny. No man can resist them. No man can escape love. Opposed, it finally conquers; unappeased, it floods with discontent; defied, it finds an outflow in gloomy fancies; subdued, like a mighty volcano it bursts forth into eruption.

The heart of man becomes in a minister that cardinal center through which the spirit urges the forces of life from the level of the universal generative energies, where it is subject at its lowest ranges to monstrous inspirations, to the birth of those great spiritual capacities which, searching and rising midst discouragement and periodic ecstasy, find their abiding fruition in fellowship with the Unseen.

THE INTELLECTUAL CRISIS

The price a man is compelled to pay if he desires to live the spiritual life is that of discontent. But that which makes him a spiritual being makes him a restless being. The secret of his divine restiveness is the faculty of reason. It drives a deep discord into his nature. It declares for an internal division and encourages an antagonism which reveals man's nature to be one of sense and spirit, of natural impulses and rational self-consciousness. Our Lord saw this when he announced, "No man can serve two masters." But in man we find a being in whom are bound together two forces under the impulse for dominance that are essentially antagonistic. He cannot yoke them together. They resist team work. Their interests constantly produce friction. They make of a man the most mysterious creature in God's universe. He appears at once as a being governed by reason and passion, who seems at once and the same time to be blind and seeing, limited and unlimited, fettered and free, rational and impulsive, brute and archangel. Living between two great and opposing forces or magnetic centers, he is at once the un-

84 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

reflecting creature of each transient impulse and the sharer of a universal life, conscious of an infinite hunger and cloyed with every shallow satisfaction, living in the light of liberty of the spirit and shut up in darkness and bondage of the sense. Will not that be a day of immeasurable crisis when reason appears in the field of life demanding the right of control and command? Appetites and passions and desires may group themselves together and slink away into the dark and unexplored regions of a man's life and await their opportunity for return, but reason when once enthroned never surrenders his sovereignty without wrecking the life. Conversely, it is true that those malignant forces do not eliminate themselves because of his regnancy. If they are not confined to the lower regions of the life and restricted in their activities they periodically break forth into rebellion, creating havoc and sending consternation throughout every avenue of the man's being.

Can any one conceive of the character of the crisis produced in a minister's life when, having passed the moral crisis, he advances by the lead of intellect to the conquest of the forces of his life in the interest of his hunger for knowledge?

He is a self-conscious being feeling his way forward and seeking to make a place at the apex of perfection among God's creatures. But this self-consciousness is his difficulty. It must come to see and to know the end to which it surrenders itself. It demands to find itself in its object. It seeks to apprehend that by which it is apprehended. In this comes its insurmountable difficulty. It is driven and cannot resist; its urgency rises as though fed from sources beyond itself. Can it attain the satisfaction of this hunger? If not, what relief is provided? If not, what escape can be found? Is man by nature destined to enter a limitless wilderness to which there is no other side? This is the insoluble perplexity. This is the irreducible mystery against which the Christian minister with his sensitive spirit is thrust. The moment he decided to live the spiritual life reason enters and announces, "Yes, but under my guidance." Then begins the quest. The religious consciousness becomes the field in which the rationalizing faculty begins its operations. It will make the self-conscious being apprehend that being who requires of it self-surrender. The work of extension is begun. Experience after experience

86 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

is registered and made a part of the life. Aspirations and supplications bring enrichments until the spiritual forces run deep with power. The intellectualizing of the entire field of the religious consciousness becomes the dominating impulse. Every problem is set upon by the forces of reason. There shall be no unmastered field. The mind seeks to think its way through. It will come to know God and systematize its knowledge of him. It will come to find a satisfactory solution of his universe. It will find an answer to the question of man's destiny. It will think out a perfectly rational understanding of the Christian gospel. With a profound sense of self-sufficiency, intellectual faculties enter upon the task of finding the coveted satisfaction for the human spirit. Many a man has been led into this undertaking. Indeed, all men with any intellectual capacity have sought it in confidence. It has a profound appeal for the man of philosophical or speculative bent. Moreover, it leads to a place of crisis. No man by thinking or reasoning has ever found God. This is an ultimatum pronounced by Deity and supported by the record of great souls. But the minister of unconquerable force finds himself driven along

this way with an insatiable thirst. He unconsciously becomes obsessed by an idea that he can work the conquest of God by the processes of thinking. Of all men he has a claim to the accomplishment of this task. It becomes his daily food. He has no other desire, no other impulse. He pursues his course with anticipation. He resolves daily to know all of God. Difficulties arrive. He grapples with them. He pushes forward as one trained to combat. He meets his opposition manfully. He reduces one perplexity to find they continue coming. They multiply as by division. His strength is taxed. He discovers he is making no advance. The more light he finds the farther extended are the baffling shadows. His proud powers of intellectual reduction fail him. He appears helpless. The mental crisis is on. Doubts multiply as in an enclosed and brooding mind. Darkness sends deep shadows into his life. The spiritual impulse is affected. Discontent and disappointment blow their storms and pour down their rain of wormwood and bitterness. Hope falls as one stricken. Agnosticism seeks to enter and find a permanent place for itself. A wilderness crowded with ominous forebodings closes about.

88 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

The way of retreat disappears. Progress is forbidden. The soul halts, goes down, surrenders to the darkness. But the human spirit cannot abide in that confinement. Reaction sets in. There is a reassertion of the will-to-power. A way out must be found. The power of faith expresses itself with the claim that there must be light on the other side. Now faith builds outposts for reason to occupy. Faith takes the lead. Reason becomes subordinate. Faith appears the master, reason assumes the post of a servant. Faith calls upon all the powers of the human spirit to assert themselves. The darkness is resisted, penetrated, dissolved. The light breaks in, the way opens, victory is won. But what has happened?

When Christianity is intellectually conceived it assumes the form of a code of ethics. It becomes a round of duties. It appears on the highway with walls of restrictions on each side. A man may will to pass over it but if he does he must take into account the surrender of his freedom. If he enters it he must give himself to be controlled. For Christianity is a way of living, a path for passage, a system of thought to which one must rigorously give himself, a

code of morals that maintains a man's life by ironclad restraints and steel-girding supports. When this is realized it is not pleasant to contemplate. The thing that happens in the intellectual crisis that is produced by the effort to intellectually conceive Christianity is that marvelous transformation which results in a discovery that the hitherto restrictions may be changed into motives for action, motives for aggression, motives for conquest, and motives for the highest aspirations. This is a most wonderful metamorphosis. It is more than a resurrection. It is more than a reconception. It is more than another reproduction. It is the incident of a new birth. Christianity becomes real and a living thing after this experience. Then comes that sweet and abiding assurance of which Cardinal Newman wrote, "that it is with the heart and not with the head that a man believes unto salvation," as he declares in his "Grammar of Assent." Then comes the light as it did to Horace Bushnell, of which he afterwards wrote, "I passed from those partial seeings, glimpses, doubts, into a clearer knowledge of God and into his inspirations which I have never lost. The change was into faith, a sense

90 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

of the freeness of God and the ease of approach to him. Christian faith is the faith of a transaction. It is not committing one's thought in assent to any proposition but the trusting of one's being, there to be rested, kept, guided, modified, governed and possessed forever." All those passing through the intellectual crisis upon being rescued by faith may say with Paul, "And this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith." But the victory is always won in the name of Jesus Christ after a spiritual struggle that will not be satisfied without his blessing.

THE SPIRITUAL CRISIS

The spiritual crisis is far more distressing than either the moral or the intellectual. It is frequently encountered after the other two have been experienced. A minister may be confronted by it without having had the intellectual crisis, but never before the moral crisis, which is fundamental. It does not lend itself readily to analysis, though it may be elaborately described. It is subtle in its operations and hence elusive. It is spiritual and frequently hidden

deep in the experiences of the soul. Its sources are often concealed beyond the reach of the most expert psychologist. But its reality can never be doubted by one who has passed through it. A spiritual crisis is intended to be a period of dynamic creation. It operates a check upon all the soul activities. It quiets the spiritual perceptions as though wresting them from the play of the supernatural light that has been so assiduously trained upon them. It slows up all the mental and moral energy as though seeking to reduce them to their lowest denomination. When it has established itself it baffles every effort at escape. It produces anguish and distress. It drives toward despair. It forces the soul to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The only recourse is prayer. The soul pours itself out midst wrappings and struggling and spiritual humiliation that cannot be uttered. Suddenly the light breaks, the darkness disappears, the burden rolls away, the despair and depression vanish, the delights rise up to dominate the life, to declare the restoration of power and to announce the victory that overcometh the world.

It is a strange manifestation carrying with it

92 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

an element of mysticism that cannot be explained except in the light of what it renders to the refreshing and reinvigorating of religious experience. It proves to be, after careful study, a period in which depleted power is restored, in which moral and spiritual energy is generated. It also sustains the contention that it is a normal experience intended to rest, restore and recuperate resolution and resourcefulness as well as to reëstablish the sources that maintain idealism and optimism against the battling realities that control the earth pull about the human soul. All ministers who seek to live the spiritual life have passed through these crises. Frequently their biographies reveal an outstanding struggle that was like unto the experiences our Lord Christ endured in Gethsemane. They face the night, enter it alone, pour out their souls in prayer and anguish, embittering their words, wrestling even unto death, crying out, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me." For no human spirit can come readily to say, "Not my will but thine be done." There must be a garden where struggle is made even unto blood before consent for crucifixion can be obtained. There must be a Gethsemane before Calvary

can become a reality. There must be the bloody sweat before the crown of thorns can be worn. There must be the darkness of death before the brightness of the resurrection morn.

For the Christian life begins with a cross. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'" What is the purpose of the cross? Surely it was not intended to be carried on the backs of men. It does not lend itself to decoration. Christ never meant that his followers should carry a cross on their shoulders until it should become the ubiquitous symbol of his faith. He intended that it should serve its purpose in every believer's life. A cross is intended for crucifixion. Take up the cross and follow him. Where? To some Calvary, to the place and hour where the cross can be set and the bearer suffer crucifixion that will enable him to find the life with Jesus Christ beyond the days of cross-bearing, beyond the place of Golgotha, beyond the bitterness of the myrrh and vinegar and railings of Calvary. Our Lord supplies crosses for men that they by the cross may die unto sin and live again unto God. Here is the tragedy of Chris-

94 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

tianity. Men, instead of using the cross for what it was intended, carry it about as a burden until it becomes the stigma of their faith. Instead of bringing the relief and the escape Christ intended, it becomes a depression, a weight and a thing of grief, from which men seek to flee rather than accept as the good news of an evangel. What then follows as a calamity if the ministry also fails to realize in experience the purpose and intention of the cross? Both leader and people miss the vital teaching of our Lord in the cross and the central truths of discipleship. A cross-bearing Christianity is repudiated by the world. It already has enough crosses, enough burdens, enough suffering. It seeks relief and escape. It wants some one to tell it how to pick up its crosses and dispose of them. Christ replies, "Lift up your cross, follow me. I will tell you what to do with it." He helps men find their Calvary which answers the question of the cross. But in this is hidden the minister's spiritual crisis. He does not willingly approach the experience of self-crucifixion. It is easier to wear the cross as an ornament or to worship it as a symbol than to let it serve Christ's purpose in the life. It is not easy to

die by crucifixion. The minister must not fail Christ at this point. The people may. They are prone to wander about the earth carrying their crosses on their shoulders. They are not willing to pay the price of crucifixion in order to obtain the life that is hid with Christ in God. But he is under an inner compulsion to bear his cross, despising the shame, until Christ gives him the victory in some Gethsemane and the final triumph on some Calvary. In this experience is his one unsurpassed spiritual crisis. Before it all others pale into insignificance. This one is paramount and preëminent. Without this high level of self-surrender the deep realizations of discipleship are not attained. Without it one never qualifies in worthiness for the ministry of Jesus Christ. Without it spiritual tragedy announces the ultimate ruin of faith and the atrophy of Christian character.

THE VOCATIONAL CRISIS

I have insisted that the Christian ministry is a calling and must not be conceived of as being among the gainful pursuits. Furthermore, I have sought to prove that it is not a profession.

96 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

Many have been led to think of the two as identical because both seem to travel the same path, at least to a certain point, in their development. They are occupations that involve a liberal education and engage themselves in mental rather than in manual labor. But they begin to diverge at any one of three points, financial profit, moral emphasis, spiritual insistence. Man's desire for intellectual pursuits leads him into the professions. The monetary gains at the start are secondary. Later they may become primary. Man's desire for spiritual and moral supremacy leads him into the ministry. Under this impulse he thinks not of financial returns. The thing that appeals to other thoughtful and frugal men has no effect on him. He seems to have a strange obsession that wealth is not found in gold and stocks and bonds, but rather in a life of sacrificial service. It is a question whether this is not an illusion, a deception of youth that later results in an unhappy disillusionment. An analytical study of this experience does not fail to answer the question satisfactorily. It is not a cunning fraud, but proves to be a most wonderful support of our faith in the operation of God's Holy Spirit

on the mind of man. It finds its origin in a subjective impression that captures the powers of both mind and body. He passes under the control of considerations that do not have their foundations upon the earth, that do not find their origin among the common experiences of men, that do not rest their valuation on the basis of human merit and earthly calculation.

After the ministry parts company with the professions at any one of the points of divergence what does it become? Does it appear as a calling? What is meant by the word "calling"? What do we mean by the phrase, "called of God to the ministry"? Not that the man has heard a voice from heaven. Rather, he has received an inner impression that he *must* be a minister of Jesus Christ. This conception carries with it an impulsion that takes captive the will, frequently against the counsels of the saner judgment, that in its encroachments upon the spirit of the individual produces a crisis which throws the entire mental equipment into a state of resistance for many days and which demands surrender at the cost of future happiness and threatened waste of the life. The individual being controlled and his future determined by

98 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

a power, that seems not his own, interprets the impulsion as the voice of God. He is "called to the ministry." There he becomes engaged not in an *avocation*, a casual or transient occupation, or daily or periodic diversion, but in a calling that leads him forward, demanding of him the expenditure of his powers, not as he would, but as the strange force that controls him from within would direct. His ministry becomes to him not a profession, with pitfalls of professionalism, but a vocation which affords him his regular occupation, enabling him to work out a career of usefulness in the field of religion. The ministry is primarily a calling, because the individual comes to have within him an ineradicable and dominant impression, that is not born of his own inclinations, that he must be a minister of Jesus Christ. The ministry is furthermore a calling, because it is not based upon considerations that rise from the field of self-interest, but from the appeals that come through the suffering and perplexities of misguided and blundering humanity. The minister is the unit out of which issues the dynamic of "otherism," which becomes the unifying power of the community life. His is a vocation, a calling, that spends it-

self in "behalf of others" in the face of the most potent instinct known in human life, that of self-interest. Here is found his constant peril. It seldom is permanently disposed of with any degree of satisfaction. Self-interest asserts itself in a thousand different ways. In many ministers it finally brings on a struggle that results in spiritual tragedy. It produces his vocational crisis.

This experience appears mostly after the entrance into what is known as middle life. It may appear as the result of any one or all of three causes.

First, a subsidence of the sacrificial impulse.

Second, the appearance of a gnawing money hunger.

Third, the consciousness of an uncertain future. As a minister grows older he learns by experience, if he is wise. He gives himself without stint through the years and discovers that much of his sacrifice has been apparently in vain. Human nature gives way. Human judgment refuses longer to accredit the course of life he is pursuing. The sacrificial impulse begins to recede. He finds himself under the lash of his will in the performances of his duty. He does

100 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

not do them because he loves them. Instead of being under impulsion as he was in his younger days, he is driven by compulsion. His heart's desire for his work has passed away. He is no longer a minister of Jesus Christ, obeying the commands of a Heavenly calling, but a servant of the church, performing the functions of a profession to which he has transferred his allegiance, and in which he seeks to lose himself in the interests of a ministerial order rather than in behalf of the life of that broader field of humanity to which his original call dedicated him. The professional minister is a travesty on his kind. *A spent minister at the middle years of life is like a "dud" lying in the sun on a forsaken battlefield.* Both failed at the moment of crisis. Both are objects of interest, in that they carry power of destruction for an enemy but fell to the ground, failing to accomplish their destined end. For the minister is prone to find his ministry verging towards its termination at the zenith of his intellectual and moral powers. The vocational crisis is on. The impulse to sacrifice and to minister succumbs to his instincts to dominate, to be ministered unto. Having gained power and place and name by sacrifice the old self

comes forth seeking to make of them means of return service, means of command rather than obedience, means of receiving rather than of giving, means of moving the location of the life "from the house beside the road where the race of men go by" in need of friendly service to the remote location where prominence and eminence forbid that giving of the life in obedience to the example of sacrifice made by our Lord Jesus Christ. This proves to be a subtle vocational crisis. What man is able to pass through it and maintain his spiritual integrity? Only he who refuses to forsake the place of devotion and resolves to stand in defense of the early impulses that led him to give himself to the ministry. Only he who insists with a determination that will not be resisted to fight it through in the name of Jesus Christ.

But the most powerful influence that produces the vocational crisis in the ministry is the appearance in a man's life of "money hunger." This may prove to be the tragedy of a minister who has business instincts. During his early years the sacrificial impulses controlled him. As the years pass the restrained instincts find limited expression, but sufficient to gradually

102 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

develop them into such form as to enable them at times to gain temporary control. The business of the church and of the Kingdom of Christ calls them forth into action. Increasing duties of administration and of organization and of money raising contribute to their encouragement. The man who raises thousands of dollars for others suddenly becomes conscious that he is penniless himself, that he has unusual money-earning power. Then appears the temptation of "money hunger." Subtle, powerful, enhancing and at times enchanting wealth, gold, ease, comfort. The sense of thrift awakens and asserts itself. The sense of frugality appears in imperial command. Prodigality is discredited. Improvidence is expelled. All the children of poverty, shiftlessness, carelessness, imprudence and thriftlessness are driven out. He stands possessed by a hunger for possession that controls his thought both night and day. The minister becomes worldly wise. His mind loses its fine spiritual discernment and functions with the greatest facility in the secular realm. The struggle increases between the impulse to continue in the ministry and a desire to leave it for more lucrative pursuits. The outcome may

easily be predicted. One of two things happens; either he throttles that maddening hunger by agonizing prayer, or it produces a spiritual paralysis that announces the beginning of the end of his ministry. *For the most dreadful ruin overtakes the splendid spiritual powers of God's prophet when he fails to decisively settle with his natural instinct for gaining wealth and possessions.*

Another unsettling experience that produces a vocational crisis is the appearance of an uncertain future. The years have passed. Youth is gone, manhood is well spent, habits are formed and set, the period for new learning has flown. Age is near at hand. Only a few years of effectiveness are left. What will he do as a minister when he is no longer desired? What else can he do? Nothing! Business does not want him. Labor has no place for him. He cannot qualify for any of the professions. He cannot turn from the path in which he has walked so long. It narrows before him. He has saved little. He has no competence. The evening time of life is near. Instead of the path of the just shining brighter and brighter even unto the perfect day he finds its end drawing near with a

dark cloud upon it. Perhaps for the first time in his life he is shaken by uncertainty. The facts of life stagger his faith. For a day his heart refuses to accept the duties of his daily vocation. A crisis is on. His mind grows sick. His spiritual vision darkens. His entire being is in revolt. If he understands himself he turns to prayer and through communion with Jesus Christ escapes the peril confronting him. If he is unwise he surrenders blindly to that uncertainty. It comes to rule his thought and to direct his life. If he remains in the ministry he will become pessimistic, morose, in his heart an unbeliever and in his daily ministrations a contemptuous hypocrite and a pathetic example of the ruin of a faithful minister in the afternoon of life by the play of an uncertain future upon the delicate spiritual powers that God had blessed with prophetic expression. The vocational crisis may not directly relate itself to the minister's faith or moral character, but it does threaten his effectiveness and ultimately imperil his consecration. It is the pit into which a man, once having fallen, is never restored without great loss and manifest evidence of an impairment of spiritual power.

III

THE PRESENT CRITICAL MOMENT

A familiar understanding of the perils that confront the minister will furnish an explanation of the present-day crisis. The situation is not difficult of analysis. If a crisis is acknowledged the causes producing it readily appear. They are not to be found in a personal study of any one individual case. The investigation must be made in the field as a whole. They must be looked for not in the minister but in the ministry. What then is to be recorded? There is a perceptible let down in ideals, a manifest prevalence of a limited unanimity of opinion and a regrettable lack of solidarity of conviction. There is not a larger company who are agreed on what they most steadfastly believe. If universal agreement is demanded it is found to exist but it has been reduced to the lowest possible statement of fundamentals which scarcely touch the highly particularized truth of Christianity. This has largely affected the message of the pulpit and limited its success. It has shattered

106 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

the morale of the ministry, producing too many failures, too many retirements, too many withdrawals, too many moral breakdowns, too many spiritual tragedies, too much secularizing, too much loosening up, too much cooling of evangelistic ardor. There can be no question of the claim that the ministry is passing through an unprecedented crisis.

However, all dismay should be allayed by the assurance that this prevailing condition can be explained and should be regarded as only a temporary embarrassment that will soon pass away, though at the time the cost drives the ministry almost to the edge of moral and spiritual catastrophe.

The ultimate source of the present trouble is found in the close relation existing between the church and the world. Both are subject to the laws of action and reaction. This is as unvarying in its operation as the law of gravitation. It produces periods that appear as regular cycles. These have been characterized as a *period of prosperity*, when wages and business flourish; a *period of decline* when falling prices and unemployment produce pessimism; a *period of depression*

when low wages and small returns produce hard times; a *period of improvement* when prices begin to rise, demand for labor increases, production accelerates and the wheels of business begin to make sweet music. The church accompanies the world through these cycles, especially during the periods of decline and depression. The moral laxity resulting in crime waves reaches over into the life of the church and its ministry. All along the line of contact there is a penetration of the influence from which the world is suffering. There are always ministers located along this line. They operate in the zone that bears the strong impact of the world. They have taken up the position there by their own choice. They may be called borderland ministers. They go back and forth from secular to sacred duties. They do not hesitate to assume worldly responsibilities when they feel they can give a service. They expose themselves to the influence and cross fire of the world. They avoid the appearance of being ministers. They believe conformity to the world is profitable. They take up their habitation along the borderline of the kingdom of God, not

108 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

knowing that there they may be overtaken by the storms that sweep the barren places of the world.

When the moral restraints of men in the secular walks of life loosen up and give down these ministers serving along the borders between the church and the world respond to it almost at once. If they are spiritually sensitive, they react by a girding up of their moral forces to resist and successfully hold their ground, while others not on their guard are swept off their feet. The crime wave prostrating the world gets them. The moral laxity lets them down. Being too near the brink the storm sweeps them over. They get vertigo and fall. Of the three types of ministers, those with the *Christ-consciousness*, those with the *hireling-consciousness*, and those with the *opportunist-consciousness*, the two latter suffer deeply. Their ranks are trimmed and their personality shattered. Those who do not succumb are either driven from their position into spiritual crisis or are confirmed in their loose ideas of what a minister should be and settle on the moral level, denying those higher ranges of personal righteousness where holiness unto the Lord confirms the life which

distinguishes a man as being anointed of God to preach the gospel of Christ.

What then is the protection of the minister during the periods when the world is passing through its declining and returning cycles? His only escape is by the gate of spiritual insistence. The elemental impulses of his nature as it seeks to find refuge in God must be released and incited by prayer to their highest activity. He should always be under the impulsion to rise to the level of spiritual genius. If he does not possess this by nature he must develop it or pass into mediocrity. Without it, he can attain only to a subordinate place as a spiritual leader.

Again, the man of urgency of spirit is confronted by the necessity of struggling unto blood if those heights of power and self-realization are to be attained. He must resolve to pay the price for genius, and if need be lash and storm and beat about in the depths and roll and toss in agony on the heights until his soul grows in capacity to embrace the whole of life. For if a minister is not distinguished for spiritual genius he cannot be considered a man set apart from other men for his holy office. God calls him to development along the line of highest

tendencies of his spiritual gifts. He selected him because of his native endowments. Then he places him under the compulsion of raising them to a degree of highly specialized proportions. He places him under the spell of genius. Now the genius is a man apart. Genius struggles at night beneath the stars. Genius holds on with the unseen wrestler until the break of day. Genius learns that the secret of God comes not by surrendering but by that ancient resolve, "I will not let thee go until thou bless me." Was not that old bearded philosopher, Thomas Carlyle, right in his definition when he was asked, "What is a genius?" and he responded, "A genius is a ship burning at sea for the benefit of the spectators." How applicable to a minister of Jesus Christ who has paid the price of struggle to gain the heights of the spiritual life and who has experienced the burning of the divine fire that produces out of the dullness of the human soul that spiritual genius which God can use as a theophany in every crisis of the life of his people.

The minister must have an aptitude for spirituality. By this we mean genius. He rises to the summit of the human mind. From its prom-

ontory he expects to behold God. He must be able to cause others to follow him. They are phlegmatic. He must fire them with enthusiasm that will lead them to pay the price of a difficult achievement. He must be a man of warmth, at times a man of fire. His emotions kindle quickly. They burn not to draw fire but to spread it. He may attain the capacity of great souls—the power to be importunate and judiciously insistent. He may acquire a highly developed personality that becomes voltaic with a broadcasting capacity that cannot be resisted. Then he may accomplish the place of spiritual genius when men acclaim him as one sent from Heaven, whose voice strikes the note of the prophets, and whose words fall upon the weary ears of hungered humanity as the assurance of a merciful and forgiving God.

This attainment on the part of a minister of Jesus Christ is a divine gift. It comes not as a sealed package to be opened and enjoyed. It is given potentiality which, received, is to be transformed later into a dynamic. The soul once having this within its possession begins that spiritual course which leads to conquest by conflict and to repeated victory by a progressive passage

112 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

from grace unto grace, until the supremacy of Jesus Christ is established in the life.

God has not failed to make ample provision for this spiritual Odyssey. It is promised to find its origin in a baptism of fire. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." An experience symbolizing to the human mind the most intense suffering. A baptism of fire! Before such an offer man's spirit resists. Submission means elimination by a consuming flame. Who can consent unto it? The minister is under an inner compulsion. Something within holds him to it. Like Prometheus he is decreed to the devouring flames that fail not until they have wrought the will of God. When deliverance is attained for him he cannot be as other men. Like Lazarus, after his resurrection and return to life, nothing can again be common or unclean. Like St. Paul, after his visit to the seventh heaven, he hath seen and felt things not allotted to the eyes of man. He has walked with God and no man can stand with him and understand the extent of his transcendence.

The immense distances separating the true minister and other men in public life are infinite and immeasurable.

PART III: ESCAPE FROM THE
DEPTHS

“The good minister of Jesus Christ must base the spirit and method of his ministry on the spirit and method of Jesus Christ’s earthly life and service. The Master and the men must have the same principles. With every allowance for what is different, the modern ministry can only be saved by its essential resemblances to that early and perfect ministry. And the modern ministry needs to be saved all the time from a lot of things, such as low ideals, officialism, professionalism, commercialism and discouragement. The ministry ever tends to be conformed to the world around it rather than to be transformed by the renewing of its mind. It is always tempted to shape its message by what the people will stand than to speak the words of Christ.”

BISHOP W. F. McDOWELL.

Part III: Escape from the Depths

The Young Minister Recovers Faith

Many months have passed since I had that memorable conversation with the perplexed young minister. A communication from him is before me. He was planning to be in my city and would be glad to see me. Within two hours I would again look into his face. I reread the letter with greater care. There was one sentence that stood out with emphasis. "I have fought through. I have come back. I want to tell you about it." These were just such words as I was expecting. He could not go forth with a resolution to fight through without at last gaining a permanent victory. What he had been had greatly interested me. What he had become might be beyond my anticipation.

He had been a type in the ministry. One that flashed and glowed. One whose fragrance was as a summer day. One whose optimism was as crystal, without a shadow or a flaw. One whose

116 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

conscience seemed without edge, whose shoulders were without a burden, whose heart was without a care, whose reason was without a problem, whose spirit was without a perplexity. He was one of those whose journey had not taken him far enough into the world to reveal to him its deep shadows, whose experience had not uncovered the darkness of human tragedy. He had not been awakened. He had not received the jolt of disillusionment. To him religion had been something of a lark, while Christianity was the quintessence of optimism in the presence of a cloudless sky. What a state of mind to be in! Who would seek to have him otherwise? It would be wicked to wish on him the storm clouds that would spoil his summer dreams, were it not for the fact that such a man cannot long remain a messenger of Jesus Christ without passing through a period of storm and stress. A minister whose eyes have not been opened, who sees men as trees walking, who has no appreciation of the marred human form and passes it as part of the wood and lumber of life, needs the visualizing touch of the divine hand. The minister who has not had his ears opened to the cry rising from the human breast under the uni-

versal reign of pain, who can walk demurely in the midst of human failure, suffering and decrepitude, poverty, want, rags, hunger, viciousness and ugly selfishness and never hear the wail of it, needs to have the amplifier of God's eternal judgment to awaken him to the responsibility of that divine decree, "Woe art thou if thou preachest not *my gospel!*"

No, I would not have the hopefulness of youth turned to the cynicism of maturity. I think a minister should possess that serious conception of life that would at least support his claim that he is following in all prayerfulness the footsteps of Jesus Christ. The world should not be a paradise, humanity should not be as dwellers in Arcadia to the minister. He should see this realm as it is with its amalgam of lights and shadows, its rights and wrongs, its struggles and its failures, its despair and its triumphs, its deadening doubts and its rapturous faiths. He should at times have some sense of bafflement before perplexities. He should at least reveal the temporary working of a troubled conscience. A manifestation of a divided self should make others feel he has some connection with common humanity. He must make people

118 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

aware of his effort to follow Jesus of Nazareth, who was one with a wilderness temptation, who was one with an experience of mob violence, who was one with leper contact, who was one in whom fiery indignation burned before the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, whose selfishness withheld bread from hungry children for a price and devoured widows' houses in the name of economic justice; who was one familiar with the shadows and loneliness of Gethsemane, who was one with an experience in Pilate's hall with its humiliations, its thongs, its hurtful stripes, its crown of thorns and its cruel mockings; who was one with a memory of Golgotha and its rugged cross, its railing crowds, its hardened soldiers, its cup of vinegar, and myrrh, its ghastly hour of darkness and its bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Yes, the man claiming to be a minister, who has not felt the demand for a burning invective against sin, who has no appreciation of the impulse that sent his Lord into the temple armed with whipcords to drive out the money changers whose striving and thieving had laid hold of the very altars of prayer and sacrifice, who would turn his back upon the Christ of indigna-

tion and violence, who would not approach to follow him, who would fear and flee from him, that man, that minister, needs an awakening, a disillusionment. When such an experience comes he will stand with ashen lips saying, "How can God stand it?"

I am of the conviction that the thoroughly initiated minister is not a man with a perpetual virgin smile. He is one whose face is marked by the fact that he shares some part of the world's burden. Those who look upon him see the sweat of a recent struggle still clinging to his soul. Why should he take himself so seriously? Why should he not receive the world as it is with concealed laughter? Why does he not accept its bafflements with a smile of mild cynicism? If he had found Jesus Christ in a personal experience he can answer these questions with eminent satisfaction. In that incident lies the secret of escape from the earth pull of despair, and the release from the tightening tentacles of pessimism. Those who resolve to fight it through appear with faces seamed and scarred as though some sculptor had sought to bring out the deep lines of experience and uncover the shades and shadows of character that

display the struggles of a personality in its efforts to realize the high differentiations that distinguish the human spirit among the immortal creatures of God.

In this is found the inscrutable mystery of the spiritual life of the minister. He is compelled to maintain his interest in spiritual energies in the midst of a material down-pull that is appalling. They drive him frequently to the edge of the precipice over which the irrational would draw him into the gulf of superstition. They close in on his active mental powers, seeking ever to disassociate them from the realm of reality. They lift and surge within him, seeking always to make and enlarge his psychic capacities and to reduce his physical forces to the disappearing point. He must be a man and remain subject to all that becomes a man and yet maintain himself on high spiritual levels. He must preserve his balance. He is under the impulse to keep his face toward heaven against the gravitation that makes the lines of his anchorage taut even to breaking. This man, the Christian minister, is the one great mystery of God's universe. He is its most outstanding anomaly, walking in the face of the winds of creation.

I

OVER A LONG TRAIL

“So you have fought it out?” I remarked after the usual greeting. “Sit down and tell me all about it.”

“I certainly have,” he replied. “I am none the worse for the fight as you see. The struggle was bitter at times, but here I am to tell you what has happened.”

His face lighted up as though he anticipated a consummate pleasure. I noticed he was changed somewhat in appearance. He was as a man who had gone through a deep experience that had tried his soul. He had not aged. He had matured. From his face had gone the flush of youth. He appeared as one possessed by a profound intention. Evidences of a growing thought-life appeared round his temples. The furrows of mental strife were beginning to open on his forehead. Lines of moral resolution were displaying themselves about his mouth and chin. Spiritual wrestlings had darkened and deepened

the shadows about his eyes which quietly looked out at me from beneath the dense brow of the forehead that overhung them, furnishing protection against any effort to encroach upon the secrets they concealed. Evidently the man had found himself. Yes, and the story would be as interesting as the romance of an explorer and as thrilling as the narrative of the working of the mind of a magician.

“I feel under a great obligation to you,” he resumed. “Your counsel has meant more to me than I shall ever be able to express. When I left you at the close of my last visit I was greatly perplexed. Only my resolution to ‘fight it through’ saved me from desperation. I could not get away from your words. When I came to you on that occasion I was passing through an awakening. My ministry had been without a storm, not even a cloud. I was living my life utterly unconscious of the misery of the world. I had appreciation only for its happiness, its sunshine, and its springtime songs. The day was at the morning for me. I never dreamed of the heat and fatigue at noonday. Then came the hour which later brought me to you with a resentful resolution on my lips. You do not

know what was behind that display of 'the spirit of the quitter!' ”

“No,” I replied, “perhaps I could not understand if you should relate it.”

“Oh, no, it is not as bad as that,” he answered, with a smile. “It is a common religious or spiritual experience, I judge, that comes to young men in the ministry these days.”

“Where did it begin?” I inquired, thinking I could assist him in getting started.

“Your words about the Christo-centric life were the check to my downward course. The first shock that doubt gave me was in a weak and evil moment when for the first time I had a question rise within me about the authority of the Bible. I had been almost ten years out of the seminary and had thought I had settled all major questions at least about its claims and place in the Christian life. Unexpectedly I was confronted in an hour of opposition, in a moment of let-down, by a sinister doubt that arose from the consciousness that the Scriptures were not the word of God as I had thought them to be. It took a long time for that teaching to get through. But there I was, stunned by the first realization that the book I had held in such high

regard was nothing more than a human record of one whom humanity had come to worship as God.”

“Why had you not seen that before?” I inquired. “Strange that it took you so long to discover it.”

“Perhaps I never would if it had not been that adversity struck me and my career was halted by a bitter disappointment.”

“Do you mean to say that you would never have awakened to the place and value of the Bible in your life if adverse experiences had not overtaken you?” I urged.

“I think that is true,” he confessed. “As long as things went well with me I seemed to have no need of that support. Then when I turned to it to cast the weight of my faith upon it, I found myself deceived and humiliated.”

“Then you were really standing where I had located you with the Bible as the center of your Christian faith,” I answered, as I sought to refresh his memory on my former contention. “What brought you to question your position?”

“It was the literary interpretation of the Bible that caused my trouble,” he continued. “I had been reared in a home where that book

was considered the very word of God. It was regarded as the very center of domestic faithfulness and of the Christian life. There was never any question raised about its authenticity or its divine authority. It was infallible and heaven-inspired. When taking my theological training I accepted the authority of the scholars as to its interpretation, as I had been taught to do. I did not question. I did not see the implications. I accepted their positions and thought I was advanced. I had no time, perhaps neither the ability to think it through and went forward feeling all was well."

"What were those implications?" I asked with concern.

"I cannot mention all of them, but for instance," he replied. "The conflict between the doctrine of verbal and plenary inspiration."

"Yes, that is a long story but too remote for our purpose now," I responded with the intention to hold him to a specific answer.

"Well, if I must name the one thing that finally got through and staggered me, it was the claim that the language of John's Gospel and that of the synoptics are so different that Jesus could not have spoken both of them, that the re-

126 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

port made by the 'beloved disciple' was not really the words of Jesus, but his thought as the disciple remembered it, clothed in his own language. In other words Christ did not speak those words. They are not his. They are the words of an editor. What confidence can any one place in the crucial hours of the soul in the words of a redactor? I needed support and, as I once believed, John's Gospel could have given it. But then, as I first realized it, the word of a reporter would not do when one wanted Jesus Christ to speak words of comfort to his distressed soul. There I was, a minister of the gospel, floundering in a storm with my compass discredited. Doubts swept over me. I seemed unable to resist them. I was carried forward by them. I found no check to place upon them. I was adrift as in a threatening gale. In my perplexity I lost my patience. I took my Bible and tossed it on the highest shelf in my library and resolved to read it no more. My devotional life disappeared. I read the Scripture only for a text and for pulpit ministrations. It is almost inconceivable that a minister should do such a thing. I was inwardly angry with myself that I had been so deceived. I had not reached the

point where I was conscious that I was deceiving others. In that frame of mind I found myself talking to you some months ago. I was then playing a game of shameful bluff not only with myself but with people who trusted me to be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. That was the inward hurt I was seeking to shield and conceal from you when we had that heart-searching talk."

"It is almost inconceivable that somewhere along the line you did not get hold of the truth," I responded, "that it is not what the Bible does for you that saves you, but your faith in Jesus Christ. You may break the anchor of faith in everything else, but if the one in him holds, you are safe. In other words, your faith in the Holy Scriptures does not save or condemn you. Let men say what they will about the Bible; if you have found its words to be true as to Christ as a personal Saviour, you need not fear."

"Oh, yes, I have found it so," he answered, "but I did not know it then. I thought that Christianity rose or fell by our attitude toward the record of his life."

"You have found it to be otherwise," I asserted, "since you have made the acquaintance

of the Christ of Christian experience. He lives within and you do not need to refer to a book to prove it. You have a witness in your heart that makes you understand that Christianity is Christo-centric."

"That was the truth that saved me," he replied. "I had never realized that man was saved by an experience and not by a creed. It all seems so clear now, but what I passed through to gain the place of light was almost like suffering unto blood. For when a Christian minister loses his devotion to, and affection for, the book Christendom has long called 'the word of God' he breaks the anchorage of his faith. No matter how firm he may be in his conviction, no matter how rich he may be in spiritual experience, no matter how resourceful he may be in resisting doubts, no matter how clear his inner witness may be, the one anchor of his faith that holds him steadfast is his absolute confidence in the Bible as the word of God. When I lost that my entire life was loosened in all its restraints. My motives failed. My ideals faded. My impulses lowered. For the first time I discovered a jungle region in my life. I had heard of it as being in other men's lives, but

it had never occurred to me that some day I might awaken to find the wolves of passion and hard selfishness at my own door. I was confronted by what I might become, yes, and the very thing I had hated and loathed in others. I had not thought this to be the result of cutting the anchor of faith. I had expected to go forward and upward according to my original intent. Imagine my amazement when I discovered that I was adrift with no harbor in sight, the course of my journey lost, my shorelines broken, my compass discredited and the certainty of night drawing close about me. I had no inclination to pray. The heavens seemed voiceless above me. There was no one to speak to me. A great and ominous silence reigned in my soul. When I was alone I was not with God. I was engulfed in the stillness of a shoreless sea. There came at times a breaking up. Storms threatened and my spirit was cast into the depths of despair. Then if it had not been for the restraints of Christian training, if it had not been for that resolution, 'I will fight it through,' I would have made shipwreck. However, in those moments of distress there appeared a strange phenomenon. *An inner voice* would

130 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

caution and advise me. It did not seem to be a part of me though I could not separate it from my own intellectual operations. It would stand over against me. It would come up within me. Its word would sound clear and command confidence. Was it mine? It seemed not, and yet I could not dissociate it from me. It proved to be my anchor, my restraint and my counselor. It kept saying, 'You can fight it through.' It seemed to produce in me a divided personality between which there appeared an increasing conflict. One seemed to be the 'Me' that was struggling and the other a 'Not-me' that would not let me go without consenting unto its control. This voice would say in my perplexity, 'The Bible is your infallible and indispensable guide. But you must make your life Christocentric.' Then something would take up the argument saying, 'How can a man do this? Can he resolve to do it? What enables a man to shift the center of his life and make it revolve around Jesus Christ?' Then would come the answer, 'Your acknowledgment of your need of him.' But could this be done by mere volition? Must not the movement toward this begin in a deepening conviction? Then the voice would

answer, 'It will even come true by your being brought to a place where in your despair you cry out, "Lord, save me, or I perish."' I finally came to the place where I could not see my way out of the darkness. All means of escape had disappeared. Then that voice again spoke, 'Cry unto Him for He is near.' Then something came over me like an inclination. I gave down resistance. I turned to Christ for help. A prayer came to my lips. I began to rise out of the depths. The altitudes that had held me and shut me in began to be reduced. The darkness lowered to the levels. I was relieved, my sky cleared and my contentment returned. I found myself with a feeling of being in the presence of Christ and contemplating him as one who had rescued me from breakdown. It was a moment of profound relief. I felt myself again. A new zest for the ministry returned. I was making progress. But the end was not yet."

"But what became of your Bible?" I questioned. "Did you have your regard for it restored? No man can afford to trust his interpretation of the Christian life entirely to religious experience. It has various degrees of reliability. Even in the best and sanest of men,

132 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

at times, it must be safeguarded. Every believer must have an objective rectifier. The Bible must share authority with Christian experience in keeping the spiritual life pure, its windows open toward Heaven and in preserving it from the shadows of a darkened mind, produced by the raids of unreality and superstition. How do you hold the Bible now?"

"It has become my guide book," he replied, "my authority, my source book on all matters of the spiritual life. It is to me now in a remarkable degree the very word of God. I have a hunger for it that calls for a daily reading. It is a new book to me. I find a unity strange and satisfying from the first of Genesis to the last verse of Revelation. I have found it the world's spiritual log book whose direction, if one will follow, will bring him unerringly into the great sea of God's peace."

This confession was made with a frankness that disclosed to me that he had discovered a new foundation for his faith. Evidently he had passed through a spiritual crisis that had made a lasting impression upon him. It had proven a milestone in his career. He had discovered Jesus Christ and given him a location in his life.

Likewise he had revalued the Bible. It was no longer a piece of religious literature that had survived out of the dead past. It had become to him a living book which had produced and was still forming new literature in a thousand languages and was creating the moral dynamic for many nations and revealing a clarified life vision for an ever-increasing number of the races of men. It is the sun of the spiritual world, when it burns out, interminable darkness settles over mankind. To extract its life-producing power terminates its influence. To hand it on to the rising generations as a *dead Bible* means to disconnect and destroy the moral dynamo that has supplied the impulse that has been for almost two thousand years the driving force of the most aggressive nations. Why should any thoughtful man stand for dissecting methods which result in the pronouncement of death over its historic remains? It means something for a man to discover the Bible in the great wilderness of the world's present-day literature. This minister had done so and in his efforts sighted the light of Jesus Christ and walked out of his darkness with the intention of making the Bible's message live for others. I was anxious

134 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

to hear him relate the story of that deeper experience that enabled him to accomplish that achievement which Bishop Gore characterizes as "a tremendous act of Choice," claiming that "it is very hard to be a good Christian."

Yes, to be a good Christian! It is easy to be a nominal believer in Jesus Christ. That requires no special act of the will. What did the good bishop mean by "a tremendous act of choice"? Surely it is not so serious as that to be a Christian. Those who have had insight into what Christ taught do not hesitate to say so. They even assert that Christianity has not as yet been tried. What has the church been doing all these centuries? What has the ministry been preaching to all the generations of men during the Christian era? Why this statement? Has a discovery been made? Has new light fallen on the teaching of Christianity? Is this holy and spiritual religion of Jesus of Nazareth something at which the spirit and thought life of men is yet to arrive? Is it true that the Bible is to continue to be the source book of a mental energy that will rise like a fountain in the desert? If so, we still have the task before us to achieve the ideal of "a good Christian."

II

DISCOVERY OF JESUS CHRIST

“When I came again into the light, imagine my amazement when I found that there still remained in my heart an element of discontent,” continued the young man. “When I found the darkness disappearing I thought that meant permanent relief. The way appeared clear before me, the enclosing mountains had been reduced, but I was in the presence of something that continued to distress me. Again that inner voice came to my assistance with a question and a suggestion. ‘You are in the presence of the pure life of Christ. What are you going to do with him?’ ‘I am going to seek to be like him,’ came the instant answer. My old conception of him returned and I replied, ‘It is his life that counts. That life, that life of beauty, of idealism, of moral force, of dominance, of mastery, of matchless purity, the crystal Christ, him will I accept, him will I preach, him will I urge upon others.’ For a moment I was carried away with enthusiasm for the conception that the example of his

136 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

life was the hope of the human heart. I advanced toward and resolved to be like him. I saw him as the Christ of the Beatitudes, the Christ of the hungry multitudes, the Christ of the healing power, the Christ of the transfiguration, the Christ of the incomparable and eloquent tongue, the Christ of the pure, white life. The one promontory that stood out before me in all his short career was the beauty of his moral character. It was entrancing. Its charm grew in luster. How could I approach it? Its light cast forth a clearness that penetrated density and challenged the opaqueness of dullness. Somehow the brightness began to disturb me. I felt an impulse to step aside and avoid its searching penetration. Then came the question, How can I ever attain that? The still small voice answered, 'You cannot, but you can follow. You can seek, ever striving to attain, and find your joy in that.' The light began to penetrate my own life. It revealed what had hitherto been held secret within the depths of my being. There appeared uncovered before my eyes the sin sources of my life, the tendency to self-seeking, the strata of pride, the elements of personal conceit, the twin supports of self-opin-

ion, the strong lines of self-assertion, the dark channels of unforgiveness, the stringent impulses to resentment and requital, the love of domination and conquest, the capacity for humiliation and depression from failure and defeat. The light was too strong. The discovery was too shocking. Instead of seeking to approach Christ I was driven from him. The moral reaction carried me again to the verge of despair. What could I hope to do with my life in the light of that perfection? Before its attainment I was lost. There was nothing to do but turn away and trust and hope that somehow a way of relief would be provided. But I could not release myself from the hold of the power of that life. I remained compelled to contemplate it in the midst of the deepest distress. My tendencies to sin obstructed my way to even hope to attain the beauty and perfection of his character."

"But," I interposed, "had you never seen the sin possibilities in your life before? They are there by nature. Those you named are native instincts. Had you never been brought face to face with their efforts to control you?"

"I cannot say that I had," he responded. "I

138 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

was brought up in the church, as you know. I had always thought I had never passed out of the Kingdom of God. From my earliest childhood I had sought to be good rather than bad. There was no problem of evil for me. I had always seen in Jesus Christ the outlines of the perfect man, whom I was instructed to follow and to seek daily to become like. I had acknowledged him as Lord and sworn my fealty and allegiance to him. I had accepted him as my teacher and authority on all matters of conduct. I had never seen him as Saviour. I had never felt my need of him in that respect. I had never had the consciousness of being lost. In reality my sin possibilities had not troubled me. Certainly I had plenty, but I looked upon them as the shortcomings of immaturity, as human imperfections that could be easily condoned. They could be as I saw them, easily disposed of as social blunderings, moral lapses and dispositional weaknesses that could be reduced almost to the vanishing point by education, training and refinement. I trusted to the influence of Christ, my ideal, to help me accomplish this in my life. When I found myself confronted by a discovery of sin-potentialities and the results of their ac-

tivities I was held by the conviction that I could not achieve my ideal in Christ. Then came disappointment like a blow that staggered all my aspirations."

"Had you not seen the Cross in all your perplexity?" I inquired. "That brings the relief produced by the perfection in Christ's life."

"I had not seen the cross so far," he answered. "It meant nothing to me but tragedy and failure. The end of a good life. The natural outcome of a man's career who seeks to live an absolutely sincere and unselfish life. I realized it later. I did not see the cross because I had not seen Christ as Saviour. I had a sort of split conception of his life. I was making much out of his life, and setting it in my thinking over against the incident and significance of his cross. I held two concepts in mind, his life and his cross. I found myself saying his life should mean more to us than his cross. It is the life that saves. The way of the life leads home. I did not see then that the cross is part of the life, that it must not be segregated unto itself. I did not realize that the cross became the culmination of the life, that it gave the heavenly stamp, that it gave a spiritual significance, that

it gave a relation to mankind by which the life could find its only safe interpretation. I had failed to see that the cross of Christ redeemed his life from the fate of other good men who had appeared as teachers, priests, and prophets, and had gone their way to obscurity. I had fallen short of that conception that had placed a lamb, symbol of sacrifice, on the throne of the universe. I had not seen Christ as Saviour, hence I had not found my interpretation of Calvary. While I was passing through the experience of transition the pull between the life and the cross was so manifest that I recall it now as almost inexplicable. When I thought of him and the idealism of my heart's desire I turned to his life. When moments of depression came, when I was confronted by failures, when I was distressed by an active conscience, I turned instinctively toward the cross. I seemed to find sympathy there. The Christ of Calvary drew me unto himself when I faced the possibility of sin in my life. I could not tell what it was that drew me, that held and fascinated me. At the last, that period of his life where Calvary stands won me by breaking all other ties. All vacillation ceased. I found myself

permanently located there. I had been broken in spirit before that scene. I heard humanity say, 'He saved others, himself he cannot save.' I heard him moan, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' I saw my own spirit. I heard my own words upon his lips. His spirit and mine were one. His experience and mine were identical. He was suffering the cross that he might speak for me, that he might exemplify the pain and interpret in material form the mental agony I had undergone in my efforts to find my way to moral mastery and spiritual peace.

"Immediately my life became associated with this incident in his life. A consciousness came to possess me that he suffered there for me. Was it expiation? Was it atonement? Was it substitutionary? I did not stop to inquire. I know the cry of his cross is mine. I feel that the suffering of his cross is mine. I confess that since I have seen his cross I can understand his life. I cannot get away from the feeling that Christianity is Christo-centric and that his life is Calvary-crowned."

"But why should you want to get away from that feeling?" I urged. "That great promon-

142 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

tory has risen so high that many generations of men have come to see that the most prominent thing in the life of Christ was his bearing the cross. Get away from it? Why, man, that is the peak of the divine life as it began its ascent from the human cradle back to the throne of God. The world never knows Christ in the highest ranges of his life, only as it views him from Calvary. Man's intellect has sought to dissolve its mystery and pull down its earth-topping altitudes, but the multitudes will not cease to approach it. They will continue to break themselves upon it and perish in their efforts to attain it. You will, if you remain faithful, never get away from the Christ of Calvary. You value what he has done *in you*. We are accustomed to call that, as a work of grace, regeneration, but there will be times when you will feel that was not enough. Your shortcomings and failures will pull the value of that down until it appears far from adequate to save the soul. Then there will be times when all that he has done *with you* will appear as worthless to help your soul to some sense of merit in the sight of God. By this I mean the building up of your Christian character. At its best it will fall far

short of what you think it should be. Even faith in Christ exercised by prayer and meditation daily will seem in moments of weakness not to have availed in producing his likeness in your life. Furthermore, there will be times when even what he has accomplished *through you* will appear so insignificant as to be almost worthless. By this I mean all your good works. They, in moments of depression will seem so inadequate. You should have accomplished so much more. You failed at so many points. You were so obtuse before opportunity. Your lethargy was your frequent betrayal. What has Christ wrought through you? Nothing, nothing. Then you face that announcement of the spirit that the human soul must not forget that in the crucial hours it is not what Christ has done *in it*, not what he has done *with it*, not what he has done *through it*, but what he has done *for it*, that comforts and quiets discontent. That identifies Golgotha, establishes Calvary and interprets the cross. What he did *for us* there may be a problem to some, but to those who walk with him it has a meaning of unmistakable certainty upon which the experience of life constantly drives for renewal of faith and

the recharging of power to resist and persevere unto the glad day of deliverance."

"Yes," he eagerly replied, "that is the secret of it. In the straits of the soul it is what he did *for us* that draws us with devotion to him. That is the binding tie. With a sense of that union I am joined to him with a love that enraptures my entire emotional nature. To me Jesus Christ is the revelation of the love, the emotion, the very sensibilities of deity. He is the solution of the problem of my sin. His cross is the answer to my yearning for perfection, the encouragement of my incomparable aspirations and the sedative for my restless spirit. He is now my Lord, my Christ, my Redeemer, my Saviour, in a most wonderful experience.

"I look upon him as God of very God. He is not to me a revelation *from God*, he is a revelation *of God*. I believe in a personal deity. The old contentions over two natures and two wills give me no concern. God, a personal being, can manifest himself through the medium of a human personality. A human body is more psychic than it is material. The divine personality can dwell in it as easily as a human personality. Christ is Deity manifest in the flesh."

III

DISCOVERY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The great miracle which Christianity constantly produces is the sustained moral enthusiasm it maintains in the heart of believers. This, I discovered, was manifesting itself in the life of this transformed minister. He had come into the possession of a strange power. It was slowly mastering all his mental and spiritual faculties. The process was still going on and he was being led forward into realms of experience with which he had been utterly unfamiliar. Sustained moral enthusiasm under the downpull of the physical life, operating through nerve, muscular and mental fatigue is exceptional apart from the influence of the Christian faith. The survival of spiritual ideals before the onslaught of materialism and the revelations of reality is secured only by a companionship with Jesus Christ and a daily association with his standards of life. Men who enjoy this coveted fellowship may be given to failing their ideals, but they do not cease to believe in them. They

may be humiliated before them but they rise to pursue them. They appear impervious to discouragement. They seem never to lose their power of comeback. If they are overwhelmed by circumstances, they serenely display their self-assertion, manifesting the power of an unconquerable soul. If they fall, they stop on their knees, with their faces toward heaven. When they rise they find themselves going in the right direction. It is the abiding miracle of the ages, this power of undiminished moral reaction that faith in Christ produces throughout the long years of a believer's life. It is the final indissoluble and imperishable witness to the divine character of the Christian faith. What more could a man desire for another than that he should come into the possession of such an experience?

It appeared that my visitor had something further to relate of what he had passed through in his struggle toward the light. I asked him if he felt he had attained the fullness he had anticipated.

"Certainly not," he answered. "I have just begun what seems to me a life of innumerable attainments. Knowledge grows from more to

more. There is always something ahead, something to be attained, another height just above to be reached. I must tell you how I discovered the Holy Spirit. He had been a name to me. I had no appreciation of him. I looked upon him as a provision in thought and accepted the teaching concerning him of recent origin. I had practically taken the position that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was a means by which theologians brought Deity in touch with the world. The recent emphasis of the doctrine of the eminence of God disposed of my difficulties, if I had any, over the place of the Holy Spirit in Christian thought. When I came into the full possession of the significance of my discovery of Jesus Christ, I found within my heart a great yearning to know the will of God that I might lend the obedience of my life to it. My affection for Christ had intensified a hundredfold until it had become an emotion. I had not even dreamed that one could be so taken hold of in his affection. I did not then know that Jesus Christ was the revelation of the emotional life of a personal God. I found myself constantly inquiring, What will he have me to do? I was frequently driven to prayer in search

148 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

for the answer. The breaking through hour finally came. The lead was again given by that still small voice which one day queried, 'Is not the Holy Spirit the expression of *the will of God?*' By what I had heard from those who believed and taught the personality and work of the Holy Spirit I had drawn the inference that he was *the emotion of God*. Those whom I had known who witnessed to him always spoke of the joy and enthusiasm he had produced in them. I had always associated the Spirit with feeling. Then came the light. The Holy Spirit is the will, the power, the 'dynamite' of God. This was the help I was seeking. I wanted to know that expression of God *over which, and out through which* went the power of God when he wanted something done. I was keenly desirous of hearing the words, 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification,' your cleansing, your setting apart to do my will, to be my voice, to be my specially chosen minister. I had this yearning deep in my soul. I could not avoid it, neither suppress it. I wanted the inner seal, the holy ordination that would give me the sense of an unbroken connection with the apostolic commission that sent forth the disciples to preach the

unsearchable riches of the gospel of Christ. I wanted something I did not have, I coveted authority from which there could be no appeal.”

“But did you not realize what that desire would lead you to accept?” I asked. “That is a manifestation of a reaction from the spiritual to the material. It is an expression of that innate desire of the human element of man’s nature to not remain entirely on a spiritual level. It is not content until it gets its feet on the ground. It wants physical contact.”

“I realize the import of that,” he responded, “but the desire kept coming up before my thought. I wanted to know the will of God as to what I should do in my ministry. The answer kept coming from the small voice, ‘The Holy Spirit is the will of God.’ I could not understand at first. Then I gave way to it. I began to think about it. I accepted it favorably. It became my will that the Holy Spirit should be the will of God to me. The surrender was like a break. Something gave way within me. It was not physical, but of a psychic nature, that made me conscious of it as of a happening one cannot forget. It was a release of tension. It was a relaxation of the long estab-

150 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

lished braces of resistance that had fretted and wearied me. I was as one landing after a long struggle in deep waters. For a time it was almost nervous collapse. The relief seemed infinite. My spirit rested, the degree of satisfaction and self-content was incalculable. I had not anticipated anything like that was possible."

"You were going the trinitarian thoroughfare with a vengeance," I replied, seeking to help him see the more thoughtful side of his experience and to divert him from the emotional phase of what to him at the start had been an incident in the region of the spiritual volitions.

"Yes," he replied, "I have thought of that a number of times. I am familiar with the discussions on this subject that have engaged thinking minds especially in the light of modern psychology. I believe in and have experienced a trinity of manifestations. That perplexity has all been cleared up as far as I am concerned. I have found it is the will of God that those who seek him with all their hearts shall know the truth and that the truth shall make them free. The heart and the intellect are inextricably joined. Truth that lives and makes a contribution to the mental and moral life must be

warmed by affection for it. This light has come in upon me like a flood. God is personal. He is not an influence or a principle or an intangible spiritual incoherence. He is a personality. By this I do not mean corporality, but a being who is *self-conscious* with unlimited *power of self-determination*. Being a personality, he must reveal himself; that is fundamental to his nature. There are only three ways by which a personality can reveal itself: by the thought life, by the sensibilities, by the volitions. I am a personality and reveal myself by the same means of expression, thought, emotion, will. God can approach me by any one or all of these threefold ways of expressing personality. I come to know God, the Father, the Thinker, the Provider, the Sovereign Ruler, the Creator, through the channel by which I express my own thought life as a personality. I come to know God, the Son, Jesus Christ, the Revelation of the love, the Affection, the Emotion of a personal God, through the same means by which I express my personality in my *emotional life*. I come to know God the Holy Spirit, who expresses the will of a personal God by the approach over which I express my own personality through the *exercise of my*

own will. Personality meets personality, human and divine, under the same impulsion for expression and by the utilization of similar means. It cannot be otherwise, if we are to have a personal God, faith in whose existence makes possible the moral universe and an intelligible creation."

"But," I responded, "do you not think your explanation is somewhat fanciful? Hasn't it a degree of psychology that may not survive investigation?"

"That may be," he responded, "but it works in the field of experience and satisfies the demands of reason. Mark you, it is the one reliable defense against the great vice of the spiritual order, weak-spiritedness. It established in my faith the personality and integrity of the Holy Spirit, who proves himself to be in a believer's heart the will-to-power. What this means to me no one else can possibly know. *I have discovered the Holy Spirit!*"

"You have discovered the Holy Spirit?" I interjected with a smile. "What does that mean? You seem to have gone on a voyage as a traveler bent on exploration. You report that you have discovered Jesus Christ and the Holy

Spirit. Now if you could somehow discover His Satanic Majesty, you would relieve a host of good people of their uncertainty.”

“Yes, possibly,” he responded. “A minister should provide a relief expedition once in a while for the benefit of his friends. Why should he not look upon himself as a discoverer? He should find new paths into unbroken spiritual regions. He should be able to recommend experience as fresh as the morning dew. To me there was a moment when the Holy Spirit was a discovery. That became the coveted answer to the deepest yearning of my soul. Why should I not be satisfied with this explanation of his relation to me, when I have found in it certainty and assurance, when it has built my faith into rugged form, when it has so clothed me about that I can walk along the border near the regions of the hitherto unknown where the cold blasts of doubt tear the souls of men and have no concern about the cosmic chill? I say it is a discovery, an achievement, an acquisition, that has abundantly blessed my life and made me a new minister of Jesus Christ. I am rejoicing in the possibilities of attainment. An eagerness possesses me to acquire the unattain-

able. I believe I am able in all humility to say with Saint Paul, 'Not as though I had already attained either were already perfect; but I follow after that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Jesus Christ.' If the possession of that spirit means participation in the apostolic succession, then surely I have a right to make a humble claim to be a participant in its rights and ancient prerogatives."

His change of attitude was my amazement. I had ideas about the spiritual life of the minister but this one was a revelation that constantly surprised me with its originality and freshness. Its most outstanding characteristic was that of achievement. He had gone on from one discovery to another. There was no finished or closed revelation for him. The door to God's throne room was still open and daily audience with him could be enjoyed by those who had attained the level where they knew how to approach him. The man's mastery over himself, the development of his spiritual powers, and his capacity for sustained interest in the things of the idealistic realm, were my wonder; while his inner assurance supported by a growing intellect commanded my profound respect.

IV

DISCOVERY OF CHRISTIANITY

With this statement he rose as though he were ready to go. It seemed suddenly to occur to him that something more should be said. "Yes, I must tell you how I discovered Christianity."

Resuming his seat, he continued: "I have a new gospel I am preaching with perceptible results. I found it in an enlarged conception of what Christ's life and teaching should mean to humanity."

"Have you made another discovery?" I asked with a display of surprise. "Your quests after truth have not been fruitless. It means something to announce a new Christianity. That may indicate that you have been doing some thinking for yourself. Better go slow lest you violate the historic continuity of Christian truth. For that error men have suffered trials, the stake and death."

"Oh, as far as that is concerned, I have no fear," he assured me. "Perhaps I have discov-

ered the other half of the significance of the teaching of our Lord."

"Well, the world goes forward by halves and marks its progress by cycles," I suggested. "The man who can see both sides of a sphere at the same time has accomplished a feat worthy a genius. Have you discovered something new, or have you just gotten a new angle of viewpoint?"

"Perhaps both," he replied. "My conception of Christianity is so much broader that I can scarcely believe I ever held the old views."

"No wonder you feel so enthusiastic over the change that has come into your life," I replied, seeking to lead him into further revelations of his experience. "A man's religion must be renewed from day to day. Nothing is so nauseating as stale religion. Nothing is so monotonous as the reiteration of a gospel that is repeated by rote from one generation to another. If you have found a new outlook, a new insistence, a new note, thank God and take courage. You have advanced to the rank of a prophet and will be henceforth regarded as a 'man with a message.'"

"I do not know as to that," he resumed.

“But I am convinced that Christianity is far more than I thought it was two years ago. The day was when I understood Christianity to be purely spiritual, a thing of creeds and rituals. I felt it was entirely for the inward life and saw very few of its relations to the world, few of its connections with the great mass of humanity. It was a thing of personal potentialities, set to work efficiency and to contribute to the individual triumph of the members of society. To me Christianity was of supreme value in the conflict for the survival of the fittest. It was the religion that secured the dominance of the strong. It was the guarantee of the upper class of culture, education, refinement. Its practices built up the inner world that made possible the development of man’s powers, until that branch of the human race that has shared its benefactions has come to dominate the world. I had thought of Christianity as a great subjective dynamic that had revealed the most regal personality the world had ever known and the most imperial race humanity had ever produced.”

“Such positions are perfectly right,” I assured him. “Christianity has been all of what you say.”

158 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

“But,” he continued, “I did not see that a purely subjective Christianity was an absurdity. I was also suffering from another half conception. I had always thought that the test of discipleship was the confession of faith in certain historical statements—The Westminster Confession, The Apostles’ Creed, The Twenty-five Articles of Religion. I had urged these as tests of church membership. I had never looked into them to see just what they meant and to determine how much of the field of Christian faith they covered. I have done so and find that they are pathetically inadequate, that they are simply efforts at the intellectualization of Christian belief. They deal with metaphysical and theological concepts and do not in the least touch any of the practical relationships of life. They seek to interpret God, man and immortality Biblically and theoretically but give no interpretation of their relation to neighborhood and brotherhood. Practical and ethical Christianity do not appear in any of their statements. Really, I had only seen theoretical Christianity. I was more familiar with negative Christianity than I was with the positive form. Perhaps I should have been. Maybe I

was reprehensible for my dereliction. I failed to see. That may have been part of my trouble that produced the storm through which I passed to my present day of cloudless light.”

“Your progress may not appear to you to be beset with perils,” I advised, “but it seems to me that when a man takes your position he must bring all his lines up to that point. Any man who seeks to make a practical application of Christianity will sooner or later be confronted by trouble. Are you going on preaching as you did in the past? What will you do with a one-half gospel now since you have seen the other half? Will you preach the entire, the whole, the full-orbed gospel of Jesus Christ?”

“That is my intention, that is even my practice now,” he replied. “Since my awakening I find that the note I am seeking to strike is already in the air. I find an increasing number of ministers have seen the same vision. Like myself they have discovered real and vital Christianity.”

“Yes,” I replied, “but the social note is ringing out of harmony with the other scores of the gospel music. It has sought to usurp the entire orchestra and drive all the other members out

of the performance. Are you in for harmony? Have you joined them in their social jazz? Or will you stand steady until you see the whole of the gospel of Christ and prepare to give it unto offending and heedless men regardless of the result to yourself?"

"That, of course, is my purpose," he answered. "I have passed through fire and do not hesitate to go farther, even all the way."

"You'll see fire if you follow that resolution," I assured him. "For the church will not readily receive the social message of the Gospel."

"It will receive it," he responded, "and even applaud the preacher, but the break will come when he seeks to bring home his teaching to the individual man of his church or of collective society."

"In other words," I questioned, "you mean to say, as long as the social gospel is theoretical, it will create no special disturbance. To make it otherwise would be impractical."

"That is what I mean," was his reply. "But that places the church in a very embarrassing situation. How can it get along with a theoretical theology and a theoretical system of practice? It simply adds another contradictory

element to the Christian teaching as the church now interprets it.”

“What are you going to do about it?” I insisted. “When you come to deal with practical Christianity you are confronted by the will of the church and the various groups taking sanctuary therein. Your religious teaching must not crowd human selfishness too hard.”

“Yes, but the church cannot afford to stand under an indictment of inconsistency,” he continued. “That is an offense which thinking men do not readily forget. Those who see the truth must follow it.”

“What have you seen?” I answered. “Have you discovered anything worth demanding sacrifice?”

“I leave you to judge for yourself,” he assented. “I have discovered this as fundamental. *The church has been asking people to assent to only one half of the teaching of Christ.*”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean,” he continued, “that the test of membership made by the ministers of the past has been based entirely on assent to the theoretical side of Christianity. That is only one

half. They have presented a half for a whole, and in a way deceived the people. They have given them a stone for bread. Christianity is more than a doctrine, more than a creed, more than an assent. It is a code of action, a course of procedure, a system of morals, a social expression; it is a life. Who can live it without first impeaching the entire procedure of selfish existence?

"You startle me," I interjected. "You are traveling along a dangerous way."

"I do not hesitate," he responded. "I am determined what to do. I am going henceforth to require all those who enter the church under my ministry to publicly assent not only to the theoretical creed, but also to the social creed of the churches."

"What! Do you dare to do that?" I answered with alarm. "That is revolutionary. Have you a right to demand assent to that man-made social creed?"

"I surely have. I shall assume it at any rate," he assured me. "Remember that the Athanasian, the Westminster, and the Twenty-five Articles of Religion are man-made. They were not given down from heaven but were written by a

body of earnest and godly men. Was not the social creed so produced? Why can I not use it with as much authority alongside the theoretical creed? I believe it can be done. I know the time has arrived for it to be done."

"You will stir up violent opposition by that course," I counseled. "What will the men of wealth in your church say who have not the social vision? They will think you are a radical of the strictest kind and early consign you to the junk heap of ministerial wreckage. You might as well face it now, you are heading for a fall and a hard one."

"That does not deter me," he replied as his face hardened. "The church must play fair with those who come to her seeking to become followers of Jesus Christ. She must not deceive them. She must not hold back any of the teaching. She must present all and trust Christ to do the rest."

"But will the rank and file of the membership of the churches and those within the reach of its message accept the social creed?" I urged upon him. "Do they know what the social creed is? Has it ever been explained to them? Do many of them know it exists? Would not

hundreds of men of means in the church revolt if they were compelled to assent to it?"

"Perhaps they would, if they were not prepared for it," he assented. "It is the next duty of the church to prepare its membership and its constituency for the enlargement of its creed by taking the one half known as the theological creed and combining it with the social statement of faith and make the two halves into one whole and present that as the confession of faith of Christendom. When such a document is made the test of Christian discipleship, then a new day will be announced for Christianity."

"But that is the Alps in the way of the progress of world Christianity," I advised. "Can they ever be crossed?"

"They have been," he replied, coldly. "Christianity must, or fail. I predict the new Christianity will. Therein lies the conflict and the message of to-morrow. Count me as one who follows the new way. I rise to hail a Christianity that has a creed large enough to cover the entire interest of human destiny, both theoretical and practical, both of the altars and the market, both of the sanctuary and the roaring shop. This is the new Christianity I have found

and rise to defend as opportunity appears on the morrow."

"You will surely have opportunity to defend it," I continued. "It will not only take defense but much aggressive work to get that message through to the modern mind. The bald-top churchman sitting on the front line as though all the responsibilities of modern civilization rested upon his shoulders will do some blinking when you make your proposals."

"Blinking! You have it right, but that scarcely covers the reaction," he replied. "Those men, opulent and complacent, know little about conditions outside the field of their own interest. They are devout men and above reproach in their private conduct, but they know practically nothing of the forces now forming that threaten the future of our social and religious institutions. They hire their minister to run their church just as they do the heads of the different departments of their business. They pay him a salary, furnish the funds for the budget to carry out his program, and go their way, expecting that he will make the church go, with pews filled and prayer meeting running at high pressure."

166 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

“That is commercializing religion at the normal market price,” I ventured. “Those men would not even make a good Samaritan. They would ride on and overtake the priest and hire him to go back and bind up the wounds of the man who had suffered at the hands of robbers.”

“Yes, perhaps so,” he replied. “It is so easy if you have money to even hire some one to say your prayers for you. The trouble with the man of wealth in the church to-day is, he permits his money to cheat him out of many spiritual blessings. He gives his bank check instead of giving himself. The church wants the giver as well as the gift. It cannot get along without both. He must help apply Christianity as well as to cherish it theoretically. The man of means does not as yet see it, but in the future he must, or God will turn the course of Christendom toward the dark days of revolution. I go to prove my soul yet farther, still farther.”

“Is it as bad as that?” I answered. He had vanished over the trackless way.

PART IV: THE LEVEL OF
DELIVERANCE

“It may be regarded as true, to a very great extent, that the pulpit, in view of its appointment and purposes, is destined to secure the conversion or seal the perdition of the world. Conformed to the purpose of its institution it is the grand moral lever of the world’s elevation into fellowship with God; but degraded by the misdirection and imbecility of improper incumbents it is annihilating piecemeal the energies of the church, baffling the benevolence of Heaven and throwing millions of the human family forward upon ages both of delusion and crime.”

HENRY BASCOM.

Part IV: The Level of Deliverance

When one comes to reflect on the critical hours of a minister's life, the hemispheric nature of the realm in which he dwells must not be forgotten. On the one hand is the region where extraordinary sins proclaim the presence of the rude, outbreaking, violent transgressor. On the other is the realm of spiritual realities which is closed to him only as he penetrates it with the spirit of the will-to-conquer. He would not willingly or knowingly enter the former. It is always in sight and its ugliness is to him an impassable barrier. Being wise, he knows colossal sins will not attack him unawares. He fears not the great drives of the dramatic crimes. They will not attack his citadel. His fear is of the minute faults, the petty selfishness, the little flint stones of meannesses that slip out from the byways and hedges of the realm of wickedness and harass the pathway of the man who seeks to do the will of God on the highest levels.

170 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

These are his peril. These threaten him with tragedy. No less uncertain is his relation to the spiritual realm. It requires of him the constant possession and exercise of the resolution for conquest. He must be an explorer in regions where only the soul can find its way by means of the inventive and constructive imagination, which, being followed and supported by the diversion of reason, finds its work accredited and pronounced worthy rational consideration. In these searchings after God the mind does not proceed far until the highway over which Jesus of Nazareth traveled is sighted. It becomes at once a thoroughfare in the spiritual realm that leads unmistakably unto the dwelling place of God. In that unbroken realm to one who explores and discovers stand out two centers, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. When these are located and accepted as contacts and topographical units the spiritual realm takes form and becomes charted for the free travel of the human understanding and for the unabated satisfaction of the soul in its insatiable aspirations for an eternal and boundless career. When therefore it is announced in a man's religious consciousness that he has found Jesus Christ,

that he has discovered the Holy Spirit, it is like the proclamation of a sighting of outlying continents in the wide stretches of a shoreless sea. Until this is accomplished a man is without direction upon entering the spiritual world. He is perplexed in a sphere without a zodiac. The depression prohibits thought and shatters his sense of reality. Witness the bewilderment of those proposing a course out into the vastnesses of the spiritual order who have not discovered Jesus Christ and located the Holy Ghost. They travesty the sacred and the most holy. They are but sailors who brave the salt of the waves and the biting winds that blow about the sequestered harbors of time and return posing as seafaring men.

To a man having entered the ministry achievements wrought by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit become epochal. They announce the inauguration of a ministry reborn. The course which it is to pursue is outlined with unvarying certainty. Through it men come to know not only *God through Christ* but *God in Christ*, and recognize the claim that both these statements must be true and are related as the halves of a circle. For the new-born minister

172 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

comes to experience and to teach not only *faith in Christ* but *belief with Christ*. In this is the great Christian urgency. Having believed *in him*, as a means of escape from the ruinous effects of wrong-doing, this minister urges forward by constant insistence *faith with Jesus Christ*. Failure at this point threatens betrayal. All men who come to believe in him as Lord and Saviour must forge forward until they believe *with him*, accept what he believes about God and his love, hell, heaven, sin and salvation, human destiny and brotherhood, selfishness and sacrifice, mercy and forgiveness, money-lender and tax gatherer, Levite and Samaritan, life and death. To this minister the preëminent question is always, What did Christ believe? Having apprehended this, he emphasizes it with the intention of making it his own faith and the burden of his message. When he grasps the significance of this truth he enters a new environment with divine amplification, and discovers hitherto untapped sources of power for his ministry. He comes to dwell in a world of new facts that make human experience a spiritual laboratory. He is confronted by enticing mysteries. He is held in his own heart by the

mystery of a great deliverance. This transforms for him darkness into light, despair into victorious hope and prostration of spirit into buoyancy and vigor. So great becomes the transformation wrought in him that he considers himself to have been spiritually born again. A new attitude is thrust upon him toward the pain and suffering, the harshness and injustice, selfishness and misery, hate and vindictiveness, blindness and doubt, of the world. Before these he seemed to have found no way of escape. He receives a proclamation of deliverance. He obtains knowledge of the sources of reserve power that enables his spirit to successfully maintain its resistance. Having gone on a voyage of spiritual discovery, he returned with the claim that on the practical level under a pragmatic test, he had found that Christianity means mainly three things, *the believers' loyalty in relation to Christ, the believers' intellectual acceptance of him, and the believers' resolution to stand with him.*


Thus being thoroughly prepared and equipped for his ministry he waits not upon the tides and seasons. With a positive message he essays to go forth. In the open he appears with-

174 *Critical Hours in Preacher's Life*

out fear or pause. He is not as one standing at a window looking gloomily out as though expecting some dreadful happening. He has a full radiance as of one refreshed and reborn. The repose of serenity conceals a large degree of confidence in an unyielding and conquering power. He is at the last analysis a minister whom spiritual tragedy threateningly drove to Calvary, where despondency gave way to rebirth, where the low tides of enthusiasm for struggling humanity began again to rise, and where a dominating faith in the ultimate triumph of the love of God proclaimed a permanent victory for all those who love Christ with the ardor of a great affection.

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